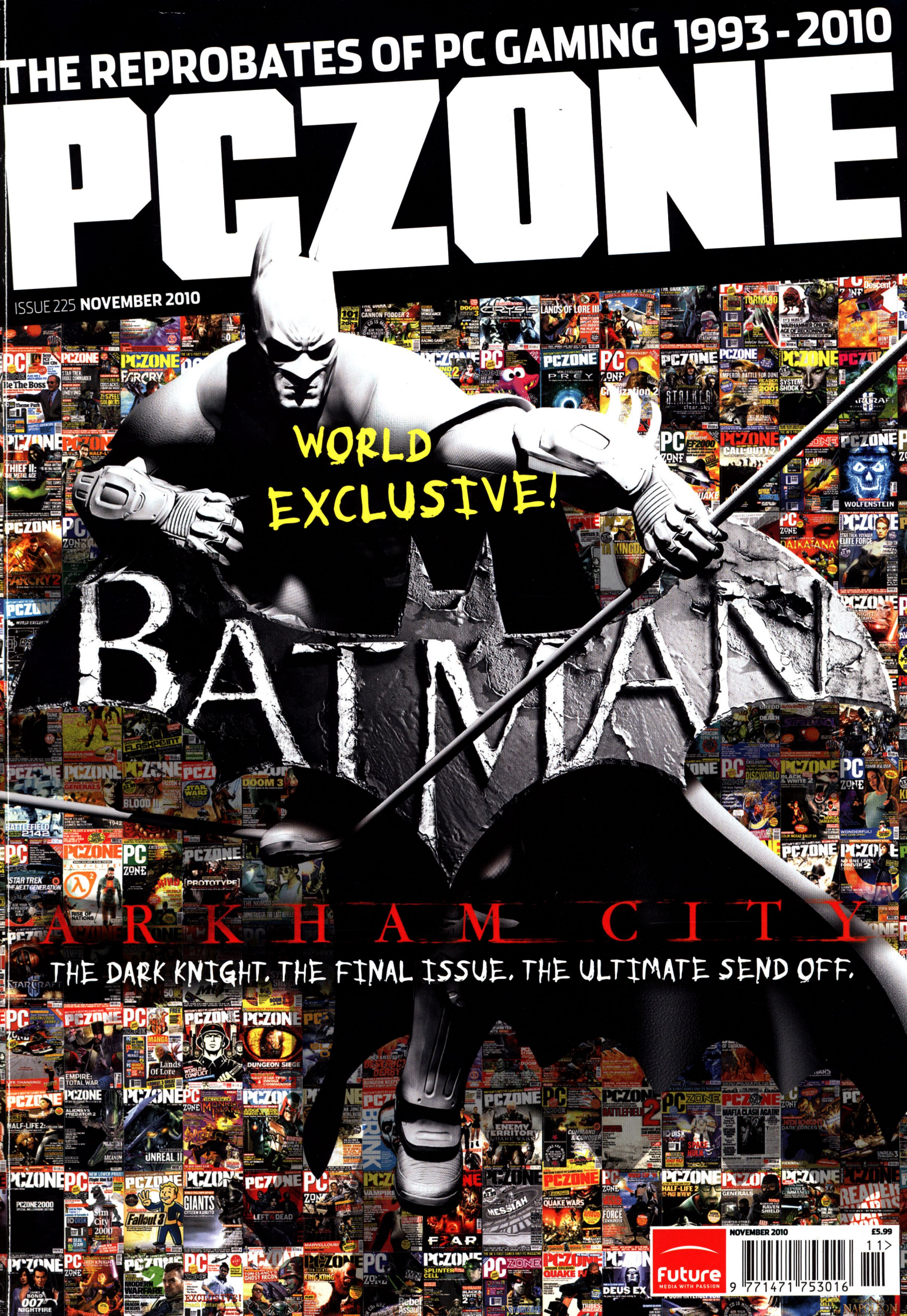
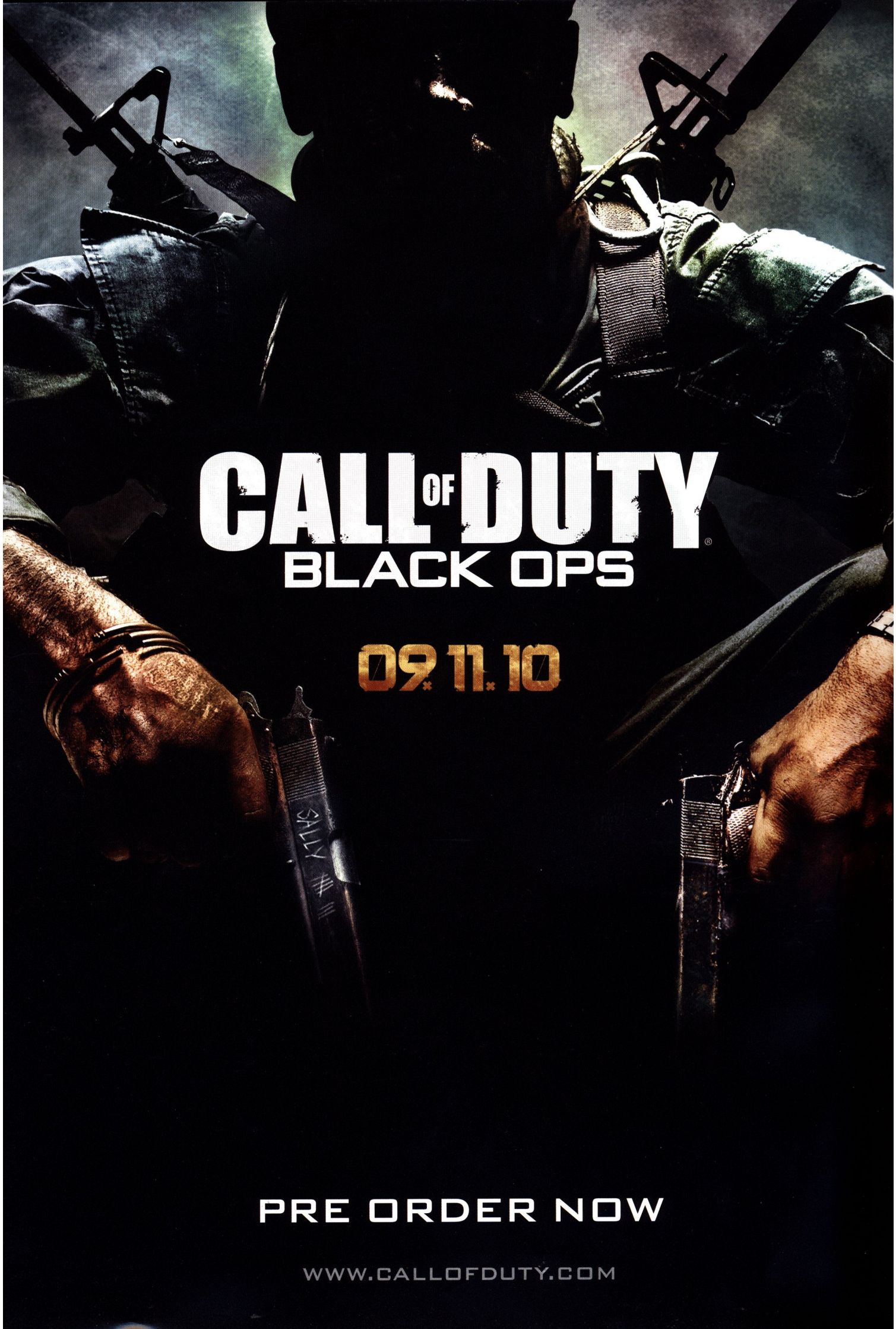
THE REPROBATES OF PC GAMING 1993 - 2010

PCZONE

ISSUE 225 NOVEMBER 2010



NOVEMBER 2010 £5.99
Future MEDIA WITH PASSION
9 771471 753016 11>


CALL OF DUTY
BLACK OPS
09.11.10
PRE ORDER NOW
WWW.CALLOFDUTY.COM

"WE WEREN'T MERELY IMPRESSED WITH BLACK OPS;
WE WERE BLOWN AWAY."

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE







TBC

XBOX 360 XBOX LIVE PS3 Wii PC DVD ROM treyarch

ACTIVISION

activision.com

© 2010 Activision Publishing, Inc. Activision and Call Of Duty are registered trademarks of Activision Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies and are used under license from Microsoft. '', 'PlayStation', 'PS3' and '' are trademarks or registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. 'PS3' is a trademark of the same company. All Rights Reserved. Wii is a trademark of Nintendo. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners. All rights reserved.

PCZONE Contents

THE GRIM TRUTH

THE END IS NIGH. Cower mortals as you stare into my terrifying visage and know fear. As you turn the pages, one by one, and the inevitability of death approaches. Feel the loss, sorrow, regret, guilt, and shame.

PCZ has died, taking with it the empty shells that were once it's writers and lovers. The hallowed halls echoing with the sound of the last dying scream. And...

Actually, it was more like a question, "Fancy getting shitfaced?", than an actual scream.

The desks sit untended, the last of Log's hairs lurks clammily on his keyboard. The years of fingernail clippings and dirt held within the battered keys have evolved into an intelligent lifeform that's interviewing for a job on Gamer. Dave's chair has been stolen by PC gaming fans and used as a bargaining tool with developers to make more PC games.

Matt and James got thrown out with the rest of the old magazines and accidentally pulped. Dave's selling their remains on eBay to cover his rent. And Richard, without much encouragement from me, strapped an old 15inch CRT monitor to his back and jumped into the Thames. Now, all that's left for me to do is stop Log from rocking back and forth in his underwear inventing new words for bum.



The Reaper
Acting Associate Editor
thereaper@futurenet.com

32 COVER STORY
BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY
The man in black comes back, and he's bringing some old friends...

54
STARCRAFT II: WINGS OF LIBERTY
A load of Protoss or a load of toss? The definitive review of Blizzard's RTS mega-hit

26 DIRT 3

62 KANE & LYNCH 2: DOG DAYS

Missing PCZ? Desperately need a subscription to something? Get your gaming fix from PC Gamer or PC Format.





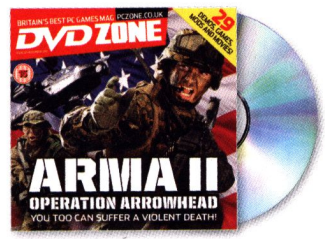
104 ONLINE ZONE
THE INTERACTIVE BIT OF PC ZONE – BLOGS, TWITTERS, AND OUR FAMOUS FIGHT CLUB!



74 SUPERTEST
You've been asking for it, now it's back one last time...

UPFRONT

6 **MEET THE TEAM**
8 **LETTERS**
12 **COVER STORY**
14 **LEAD NEWS:** DRAGON AGE 2
16 **SPECIAL REPORT**
20 **LOG'S COLUMN**
22 **CIVILIZATION V**
24 **STAR WARS:** FORCE UNLEASHED II
26 **HITMAN 5**
27 **GRAND THEFT AUTO V**
27 **SCIVELATION**
27 **WARHAMMER 40,000:** SPACE MARINE
28 **OPERATION FLASHPOINT:** RED RIVER
28 **TELLTALE'S JURASSIC PARK AND BACK TO THE FUTURE**
29 **DIABLO III**
29 **F.E.A.R. 3**
29 **GUILD WARS 2**
30 **DC UNIVERSE ONLINE**
30 **INERGY**
30 **TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED 2**
31 **DIRT 3**
31 **DUST 514**
31 **TRON:** EVOLUTION
32 **BATMAN:** ARKHAM CITY
40 **MEMORIES OF PC ZONE**



98 FREEWARE
Cut out shapes and see naked guys shoot each other, we've got every genre of free games covered.

REVIEWS

54 **STARCRAFT II:** WINGS OF LIBERTY
60 **COMMANDER:** CONQUEST OF THE AMERICAS
62 **KANE & LYNCH 2:** DOG DAYS
64 **ARMADA 2526**
65 **NATHAN TETHERS:** PUZZLE AGENT
66 **BLACKLIGHT:** TANGO DOWN
67 **18 WHEELS OF STEEL:** EXTREME TRUCKER
68 **PRO CYCLING MANAGER 2010**
69 **RAILWORKS**
69 **TOWING SIMULATOR**
70 **FOUR OF THE WORST**
72 **WORKING NINETY-FIVE**
74 **THE LAST SUPERTEST**
82 **BUDGET**
84 **BUYER'S GUIDE**
86 **A LETTER TO THE INDUSTRY**
87 **TATZONE & COMPETITION**

HARDWARE

89 **NEWS**
90 **DEAR WANDY**
92 **HARDWARE:** THEN AND NOW
94 **COLLECTIBLE HEADS!**

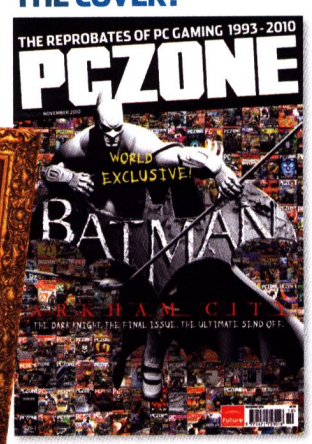
FREEPLAY

95 **NEWS**
96 **DEMOS**
98 **FREEWARE**
100 **EXTEND**
102 **MAP MAKING:** LEFT 4 DEAD 2
104 **ONLINE ZONE**

LOOKING BACK

106 **DEVELOPERS' COMMENTARY:** TRIBUTES TO PC ZONE
112 **NEVERQUEST**
114 **BACK PAGE**

WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



32 **BATMAN:** ARKHAM CITY

Too busy? *PC ZONE* in 80 words...
This month we have lots of people saying brilliant stuff about *PC ZONE*: ex-*ZONE* writers and staff, developers, publishers and readers have sent in words saying how wonderful this magazine has been to them, and how brilliant it was generally. And let's face it, we have been fucking fantastic. So fantastic we're easily worth a fiver a month at the least. Yet you lot ran off to the internet to read crap for free and killed us. You fucking gits.

Meet The Team

PC ZONE was brought to you by...

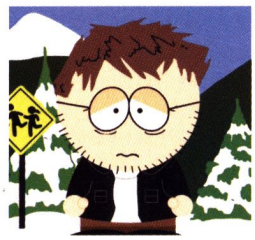


DAVID BROWN

Dr Everything

David wrote so much, we invented writers to create the illusion of variety. Jon Blyth was his easiest creation – you can write that shit in your sleep.

NEW JOB: Pro-Thumb Wrestler

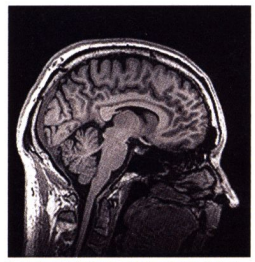


RICHARD COSGROVE

Production Editor

Richard says his time at *PC ZONE* has "ruined words" for him, and once released into the wild he will never talk, write, or acknowledge any language again.

NEW JOB: Yacht Warden

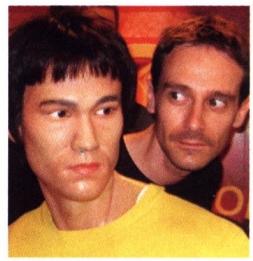


MATTHEW KENDALL

Art Editor

Many magazine companies believe that a publication will live or die on its the strength of its design. So, you can blame it all on Matthew's shit choice of fonts.

NEW JOB: Gondolier



JAMES ROFF

Deputy Art Editor

Silent and powered by rage, Deputy Art Editor Roff took the closure hardest of all. He bit through an telephone directory and shat out a wingless bee.

NEW JOB: Fuming Colossus

The Most Recent Surrender Monkeys

The ones who left as we were dying



JON 'LOG' BLYTH

The death of *PC ZONE* has sent Log, once a voracious pervert, into an asexual catatonia, to the relief of the poor peacocks at Newstead Abbey.

NEW JOB: Tweeting farts



STEVE HOGARTY

Ensconced in the online newswhirl, Hogarty has replaced his legs with news antennae. He can now be found on his back, pointing them into the night sky.

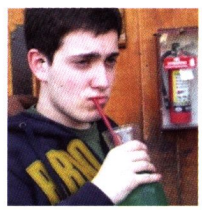
NEW JOB: Editing the 'net



PAUL PRESLEY

Rear Admiral Prezzlewick is more magazine than man these days, and you should ask your newsagent where your CD is, if it is not spinning on his nipple.

NEW JOB: MMMagazines



ED ZITRON

Ed Zitron has not written for us since his new employer reacted badly to offensive calls from *Darkfall* fans. Or has he? Who can truly tell?

NEW JOB: Schmoozing PR in NY



SUZY WALLACE

The magnificent Wallace turns any room into a foul-mouthed bouncy castle of fun. Has she toned it down in her new job? Has she fuck.

NEW JOB: Producer at Blimey! Games



MARTIN KORDA

Martin consults, it's like a reviewer that isn't showing off to a crowd, and actually has a chance of making a difference. Bastard.

NEW JOB: Beast/Human Liaison Officer



JAMIE SEFTON

Jamie's 'Northern Scum' status was cemented when he moved north to a job promoting Northern games. Stop acting like it's a race!

NEW JOB: Saying words wrong



STEVE HILL

No more will Hill's face be used to obscure the sexual parts of a naked lady. In the magazine, anyway. It might still happen at home. We haven't asked.

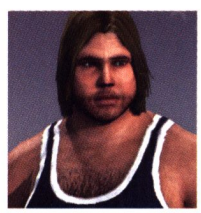
NEW JOB: Ladies man



WILL PORTER

Will has been working on a "secret project". He won't tell anyone, even when he's pissed. It's like he knew we'd write about it.

NEW JOB: Being a somebody



RICHIE SHOEMAKER

Richard's response to the closure was to let his tongue to unfurl like a red meaty carpet, causing a procession of tiny celebrities to wander into his mouth.

NEW JOB: Who can say?

IF YOU WANT TO GO FURTHER BACK, TURN TO PAGE 40 FOR OUR LAST SELF-INDULGENT WANK INTO THE VOID

Alienware™ M11x
The most powerful 11-inch gaming laptop in the universe
Optional Intel® Core™ i7-640UM Processor
1GB NVIDIA® GeForce® GT 335M GPU with optional NVIDIA® Optimus™ technology
Up to 8GB of DDR3 800MHz RAM with 64bit OS
dell.co.uk/alienware

cnet BEST OF CES 2010 WINNER Gaming

HARDWAREHEAVEN PERFORMANCE AWARD



CONQUER THE DAY.

THE ALIENWARE M11X — HI-DEF GAMING AND ULTRA PORTABILITY.

ALIENWARE® | ALL POWERFUL

intel i7 CORE inside™
Faster. Smarter.

Get proven performance with the Intel® Core™ i7 processor. Intel's original performance processor.
Intel, the Intel Logo, Intel Inside, Intel Core, and Core Inside are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and other countries.

Letters

Tamsin Oxford **wades through tissues and tears as you all bid a fond farewell to *PC ZONE*...**





In this issue we are publishing all the lovely letters and notes of farewell sent by the loyal readers of *PC ZONE*. In honour of this momentous occasion, we will be giving a prize to every single letter published. Thanks go to EA Games for being our superb sponsor for the really shiny new games and tech. However, each prize also includes things that are a little, ahem, different. Be warned... – Ed

A POEM FOR PORTER

Love *PC ZONE*! It's the best magazine ever! Even wrote it a poem:

Roses are red
Vilitos are blue
I love PC ZONE
and Will Porter too.

Martin Higgins

For the weirdest farewell letter you get a prize on the condition you don't stalk Will.

A FOND FAREWELL

There was a tear in my eye when I heard about the untimely demise of your fine magazine. I remember saving up my cents to get my first issue of *PC ZONE*, a CD edition with a *Splinter Cell* demo, so many years ago. Never before has a magazine brought so much laughter to my life.

Thank you to Steve Hogarty for your review of *The Sims 2 H&M Fashion Stuff*, one of the funniest things that has ever been written.

Thank you to Steve Hill for the always hilarious *NeverQuest*, and your annual review of the latest *Football Manager* that never failed to amuse.

Thank you to Will Porter for Mystic Will and your zany predictions.

Thank you all for your Supertest podcasts, which brought us a bit closer to your crazy world.

My stack of *PC ZONE*s will always have a place in my heart. It's been fun, guys and gals. Thanks to you all.

Julian Callan

Thank you for writing such a long and nostalgic letter. Check out the last ever Sup[p]ertest on page 72.

"My stack of *PC ZONE*s will always have a place in my heart. It's been fun, guys and gals. Thanks to you all"

LAST KING OF LETTERS

THE GREAT ENABLER

I heard the news today and I thought I'd send in my story regarding what *PC ZONE* has meant to me.

My parents split when I was a year old, and I haven't lived with my dad since that time. I spent three of my pre-teen years living in the US, during which time I had less contact with my dad than at any other point in my life. One of the things we talked about, when we did get a chance to talk, was games.

We talked about other things, sure (music comes to mind), but the games connected us across the distance. When we came back from America, I got a chance to see him more. This could have been awkward and difficult, but the thing that made it easier was *PC ZONE*. He'd amassed a collection of *ZONE*s, and hunting through those and discussing their contents helped us get to know each other, and develop the good relationship we have today.

For years, the icebreaker in our conversations was the latest *PC ZONE*. We talked about the games, the features, and the staff. To this day, we often discuss what a shame it was that Suzy Wallace left.

Of course, *ZONE* has helped me in other ways. Showing me which games to buy, showing me hardware I wished I could afford. Of course, there's a good chance I would have gotten on as well with my dad even without the *PC ZONE* to help it along.

Either way, *PC ZONE* will always be a fond memory, and the old, drawn-in magazines upstairs will remain prized possessions.

It's gonna be hard to see it go.

Thank you, *PC ZONE*! I have to go now, there's... something in my eye.

Jimi Cullen

A letter that actually brought real tears to Log's eyes. Although that could have been the exterminator fumes. Congrats! You've won a fabulous game courtesy of EA Games.

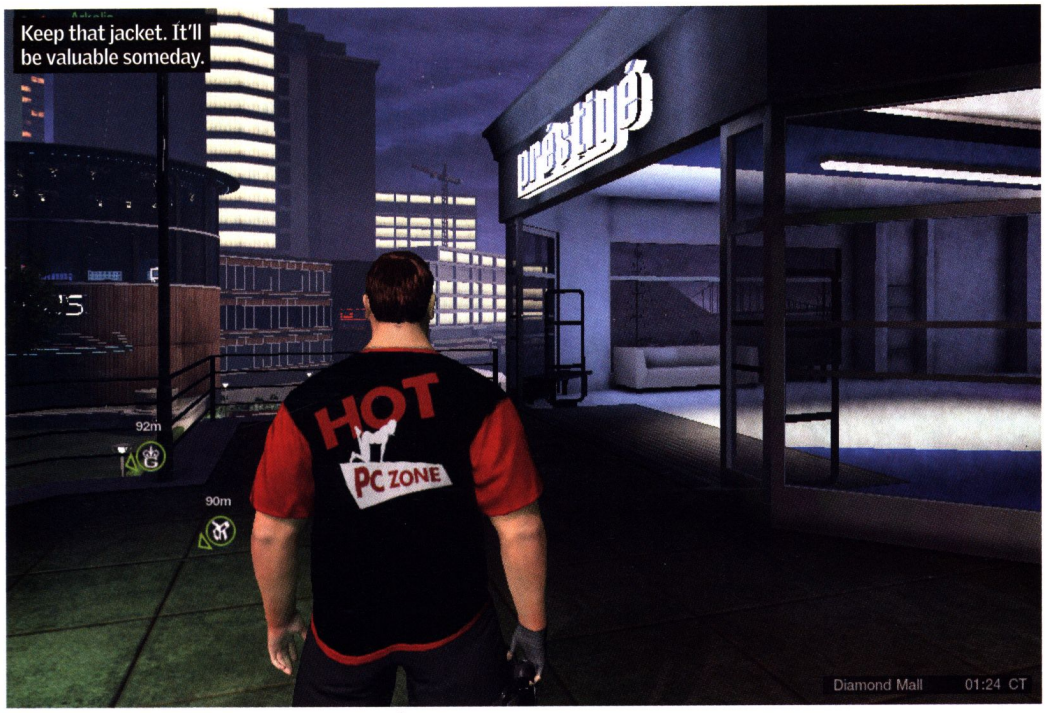


PC ZONE likes uniting families across oceans.

CULTURAL REBELLION

I spent my teenage years and early 20s in Baghdad, Iraq, in the '90s! This was at a time when there were economical and cultural embargoes on the country. The internet was not allowed, no mobile phones or even satellite TV channels.

Yet the PC gaming community thrived – something you've covered in an article about network cafés in the city – and I was an avid member of that community. From my humble XT (with a huge 10MB hard drive), through to my 486 and, the last PC I owned there, my Pentium III with a Voodoo Banshee!



"Even magazines were embargoed by the coalition. But, every once in a while, a *PC ZONE* would turn up"

Of course, any news about the PC gaming world was important to us. Any slither of information or rumour, no matter how old, was what we wanted. Even magazines were embargoed by the coalition forces after the first Gulf War. But, every once in a while, a *PC ZONE* would turn up. It would have been smuggled in somehow. A friend of a friend of a relative of a friend who's visiting from the UK; a son of a diplomat who's father has "political immunity" hence they didn't search his suitcase; or a driver between Jordan and Iraq would risk his job by smuggling them in.

They could be anything from three to six months old but, oh, we devoured them! Whoever the lucky person was that had the magazine would only give them to his entrusted circle of friends, and one by one we would read it, keeping it for a week or so. I used to read the magazine from cover to cover. I didn't stop until I'd read every remark, every subtitle, every comment, and even every advert! It was liberating!

And then the internet came along to all the world, and we'd read in *ZONE* about the web, about how Freeserve had shocked the UK by offering internet for free (well, just the price of the phone call) and how in the late '90s something called "ADSL" was supposed to turn the internet world head over heels.

I still fondly remember your issue that featured *Theme Park World*, the triumphant return of the favourite series, with it's fancy new 3D graphics and "you can ride the roller coaster" feature. I remember reading that article about 20 times and photocopying it before returning that sacred issue. I still remember the devs saying that they really wanted to make *TPW* in the past but PC hardware wasn't strong enough, but now it was.

I feel emotional just typing this, remembering how *ZONE* was like a window to the outside world, a glimpse of the future. It was a source from which we quoted and spoke about for months after the we'd read the issue, hoping that soon another brave soul would bring us an issue, and we could look at how things were progressing.

Thanks for bringing the news to a legion of Iraqi enthusiasts, and for giving us hope and game reviews! You'll be missed.

Ali

This letter brought tears to my eyes. Thank you for a unique and profound insight into another world. I am willing to bet that all the hallowed editors of *PC ZONE* are all touched by this sentiment.

MEMORIES OF ZONE

PC ZONE, you were mighty. You were grand. You were unprecedented, and life will never be the same. I loved you because you were funny, never took yourselves too seriously and, for most of your life, went against the grain.

Your writers were hilarious beings and your community possibly more so. You never treated me like a idiot, even when I was one. You never made me feel like a fool, even though some far-too-serious gaming places did.

When you needed to be, you were clever, critical and, above all, honest. When you didn't need to be, you were plain good old fashioned funny.

Sirs, madams, writers and forumites. I bid thee all goodnight.

Jack Markham

PS: The drinking feature was without a doubt the best thing you ever did.

LATIN LOVER

You were my adolescence. My first *PC ZONE*s were January and February 1995. I still have them, I still read them. I started buying it semi-regularly in 1997, subscribed in mid-1998, and still subscribe to this day. Until now.

You were my adolescence. You were my spod bible. My teenage years were narrated by Charlie Brooker, with Macca on lead guitar, Steve Hill on rhythm guitar, Patrick McCarthy on bass, Duncan MacDonald on sax, and Jeremy Wells on drums. And Paul Mallinson capering around, Bez-like, on the stage. It genuinely feels like a part of me is dying.

One other thing: I'd like to see other magazines make the national news upon their demise. You mattered. There was no magazine like *PC ZONE*. There never will be again. Something intangible ends here and whatever it is, it's gone forever.

I charge anyone who owns old copies of *PC ZONE*, particularly from the imperial phase of 1993-99, to protect them. There's something in them that cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

YOUR SHOUT!

~~SEND US~~ No More REVIEWS

STOP SHOUTING

LEFT 4 DEAD

Name: Josh Griffin

***PC ZONE* SCORE 94%**

This a great game to play with your mates online. Fighting hoards of zombies never gets tiring and the special infected adds more of a challenge to your survival.

The AI director works great, it makes the game different every time you play it, except for the occasionally daft Witch placements.

***Left 4 Dead* has expanded with the help of user created campaigns and other maps, some fun, some terrible. Playing this game online is a blast.**

YOUR SCORE 95%



Your Shout! were reviews sent in by you, our readers. Every one that was printed here won the writer a top PC game. Or at least one we had lying around...

PCZONE FAREWELL



***PC ZONE* has ended and hell has frozen over. Alastair and Kathrine uncovered this tragic fact in Norway. For this they win a copy of *Battlefield 2142 Deluxe Edition* and a G9X Laser Mouse courtesy of EA Games.**

Something that has now died in September 2010.

Anima eius et animae omnium fidelium defunctorum per Dei misericordiam requiescant in pace.

Matthew Harris

We're really hoping that's not some kind of zombie curse.

SO LONG, AND THANKS

I'm a fairly new reader. I've not been around since the very beginning. As a matter of fact I've only been a reader for a little over three years now, but in my short time reading the mag I've grown very attached to it.

The quick wit of the writers, the controversies, and also the extremely attention-grabbing "Subscribe to *PC ZONE*" pages (although that hairy backed woman has possibly scarred me) have all been something I've not found in any other gaming magazines. No one does it like ZONE. No one.

The news of *PC ZONE* folding hit me hard, as I'm sure you're aware by my forum and Twitter posts. *PC ZONE* has been a huge part of my life for such a long time and I'm going to find it very difficult to get over the loss of my favourite magazine.

You've shaped me as a gamer and, perhaps worryingly, a human being.

An icing version of the mag even made it onto my birthday cake last year because I was always seen reading it. For the last three and a bit years I've been making mental notes of when the issues are released, scraping together some money and legging it to town to buy my copy. I've stood in WHSmith while one of the workers has dug around in their delivery trolley early on a Wednesday morning, just to ensure that the issue was in my hands.

PC ZONE has been my precious, you see. What am I going to do now? Read other magazines? Not flippin' likely.

PC ZONE is the only gaming magazine I've read that has reviewed games with complete honesty, and has the greatest style of writing. Before picking up the magazine for the first time I was buying all kinds of games without any knowledge about what I was letting myself in for, meaning I wasted a hell of a lot of money on completely random and shockingly bad games. Your reviews have helped me a great deal. They've helped me pick out the good games and avoid the bad.

"You've shaped me as a gamer and, perhaps worryingly, a human being"

It's because of you that I finally picked up *Team Fortress 2*, a game that I've spent around 263 hours on to-date.

Above all, the best thing about *PC ZONE* has been the community surrounding it. Those that regularly frequent the forums are the best bunch of gamers I've ever had the pleasure of chatting to. The likes of SunScramble and Madameye have made me laugh. I sincerely hope that you keep the forums up and running for us to meet up and rant. I'm also hoping you'll keep your servers open for further Fight Clubs as I've thoroughly enjoyed them.

I'm going to finish by simply saying thanks for everything. Never again will there be a magazine as beloved as this. So long to the incomparable *PC ZONE*.

Chris 'Halrick' Watts.

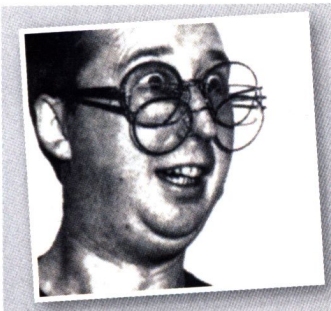
Sadly the servers are now closed and all will have moved on. But at least you reignited the hairy ass debate. That's always a good way to go out.

MUSICAL MALADY

"How do I live without you" started playing in my head as soon as I read about *PC ZONE*'s departure.

I don't know why, maybe it's because I relied on you for my PC gaming news, maybe it's because I've grown accustomed to seeing your faces stare at me once a month like some soulless zombie writers yearning for me to let





THE END OF TIMES

I've been reading *PC ZONE* since I was nine or 10 years old.

ZONE's always been there, has always been funny, and occasionally misinformative (I'm looking at you, Martin 'New class for *Team Fortress 2* called the Pyro' Korda), but most of all it's always felt like it had character.

I'd like to let you know something: remember the Mr Cursor column when he claimed to have deleted a random line of code from the Mars Rover's programming? My young mind struggled to believe that the column wasn't a factual piece, and so I tried to warn NASA for all of 10 minutes before I gave up on finding the phone number (pre-internet days you see).
Sam Grant

my mind be eaten by the magazine (which is actually enjoyable), maybe it's because I've recently been laid off and now have time to play in the Fight Club, maybe it's the personality you give your writing which I have never found in online blogs, maybe it's the fact that I now have nothing to read on the loo or maybe, just maybe, it's because I just heard the song 40 seconds ago on TV.

Whatever the reason, there is one thing I know for sure, that I will miss *PC ZONE*. I will miss the articles, the exclusives, the hilarious captions, the competitions I entered but never won (it's the taking part), the Back Page which was always a perfect top to an already delicious cake but, most of all, I will miss you, the writers of past and present, and everything you brought to the pages.

I, and surely all readers of *PC ZONE*, wish you the best for your futures.
Martin

TEEN LOVE

I know you won't remember me. I was only 15 years old when we met, on the way back from a football match, in that newsagents opposite Cheadle Hulme station. It was so long ago, but you never forget your first time, especially when it's a grubby encounter in a railway siding with McCandless and McDonalds. Three things ruled my life when I was a teenager, football, music and you, *PC ZONE*, you old romantic. And you know what? It's not just a cliché, I really didn't forget. I chased the dream*, just like I always said I would. I left university, which was setting me up for a lucrative career in something mathematical, and went to work for *Edge* magazine. Back then you and I were rivals so I wasn't allowed to write for you. Instead I freelanced for *PC Gamer*. Not the same, not the same.

I gave up writing about games five years ago. Now I help to make them and I suppose that (indirectly, at least) is down to you, too. The closest I come to games journalism these days is my radio show/podcast, *One Life Left* (onelifeleft.com), which is less about games and more about how stupid games are.

I think I learned that from you too. And even though I moved on there's always been this bit of me that wanted to write one final piece, just for you. Call it closure, I guess. I mentioned it to your editors, sometimes, drunk and shameless. I promised to pitch something and I never did. And now I never will, I never will. Carpe diem.

Also, fuck you, because without *PC ZONE* I wouldn't know anything about videogames. I'd be an accountant in middle England somewhere, smug, rich, well-fed, with a charmless family, golf on Fridays, and dead inside. But mostly thank you, for the same reasons.

If you ever want to come on the radio you only have to ask.
Ste Curran
* With hindsight I now realise I may have chosen the wrong dream.

"Three things ruled my life when I was a teenager: football, music and you, *PC ZONE*, you old romantic"

This is your carpe diem, Ste. PCZ

BITE-SIZED BYE-BYES

Just seen the *BBC News* article about your closure... I've been a reader since the start and will be sorry to see you go. Good luck.
Drew

Farewell to the only mag that I've ever loved. I remember the anticipation of buying my first issue – the one with *Space Hulk* on it – when I was 11, and the way I nearly shat my pants when I was playing the demo from the cover disk.

This magazine has, more than anything else guided me through those dark days of console world domination, and meant that I've always stayed true to my trusty PC.

God bless Charlie Brooker, Mr Cursor, and of course Culky (the first ever video that I watched on a PC screen). I'll miss you.
Nick Price

It's been good. Long live *PC ZONE*.
Si.diko1

I want to say thanks for all you've done over the years. I've been a subscriber of the magazine for almost 12 years and loved every issue. I was sad when I saw the news of the end of the mag.

I wish you all the very best for whatever you all do in the future. Thank you for all the effort you all have put in over the years to give us some great reading. All the best.
Philip

How can my 11 year-old son develop into a man when you've gone – where will he read about gaming porn and censorship now? Will he be forced to reading substandard rubbish and find his gaming brain wither on his undeveloped vine?
Dr Chris Hall

Really, really gutted to hear that issue 225 will be the last *PC ZONE*. I've been reading it for a long time and really think of it as part of growing up in a way, sounds silly.
Simon Schwarz

Thank-you so much for 13 years of silly captions and penis jokes, my life would've been empty without you. Love from a long-time reader.
Fraser Wilson

tweet spk

How the Internet raged in 140 characters or less

Who is responsible for this terrible decision? I want names and addresses so I can deliver swift brutal vengeance! @ongeswfc

Just heard @pczone is closing soon which is a shame. i used to read it around the late '90s and remember it being a very funny read. @pedoublety

Sorry to hear your closing. Goodbye honest pc gaming and 17 years of ravish fun!!! @tarekmallo

I assume we will be getting black armbands with issue 225 (and maybe that Sherbert Dib Dab at last!) @peachFUZZ_uk

Very sad to hear that the magazine is shutting down. I've had it shipped all the way to Seattle for years, a little bit of Blighty. @Clamatius

Going to resubscribe to @pczone using the offer in the latest mag. The minimum contract is a year, so I DEMAND I receive 12 more issues! @ darth_careful

Noooooooooo..... you cant stop! What am i going to read then? ;(@Mad_Viking

Cocksuckers. I can't believe it. I'm actually getting a bit teary. Can't we do anything to save you? I love you guys. @scoothamilton

Splitters. @killerkingo

PC ZONE closing – NOOOOOOOOO!oki knewaboutthisalreadybutNOOOOOO! @DaxHalo

Gutted. @Sensei1973

Sad day as @pczone officially announce their closure. Thanks for the memories, without you my childhood would never have been the same. @RayWillmott

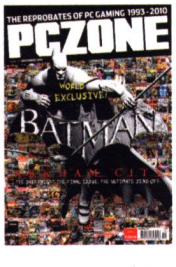
goodbye and thank you for all your hard work over the years *hugs* @cl_thompson

DIRTY PROTEST @kleptonin



COVER STORY

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY



LIKE THE DARK Knight himself, *Arkham Asylum* came out of nowhere and punched us all in the face with the unyielding gloves of quality. Top-quality dialogue from Hollywood's Paul Dini. Top-quality acting from Kevin Conroy and Mark Hamill – Batman and Joker from the '90s *The Animated Series*. But most of all, the fact that they built a world which allowed you to act and feel like Batman. Can the close, tense environment of Arkham Asylum, its island setting, survive the transplant into Gotham City? Will Catwoman be on your side? Why was the Joker coughing in the trailer? We don't know yet but all the evidence is pointing to another engrossing masterpiece...

PAGE 32

UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the **world of PC gaming**



JOYS OF NEWS

Jon 'Log' Blyth

THIS IS IT, people. Recline into your memory foam mattresses, and prepare to leave a you-shaped groove as the *PC ZONE* news section lowers its arthritic bulk onto your downbelows for one last time.

We'll try not to die on top of you, but you might want to have the emergency services pre-dialled. Oh, and sorry about the stink of Deep Heat.

Whip out the bone china and the good cutlery, the news priest is here. He's a stern man, having witnessed the infinite cruelties of a species labouring under the delusional belief that it's above and outside nature. And yet, even labouring under that burden, he'll always manage a wry smile when he sees two pandas having sex.

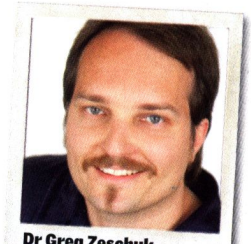
As we approach the news event horizon, the light reflected from us will be slowed by the immense gravitational pull and take longer to reach you. For this reason, our reporting may seem sluggish, and mismatched to less doomed objects, such as the internet.

When we finally cross that point of no return and our image becomes infinitely slow, remember us like this, a noble, dignified dinosaur, frozen in the amber of space-time.

We might appear dead, but in our unobservable pocket of the universe, we will be having a party. For news is dead. We are no longer slaves to the events crafted by others. We can finally, simply, be.

Goodbye!

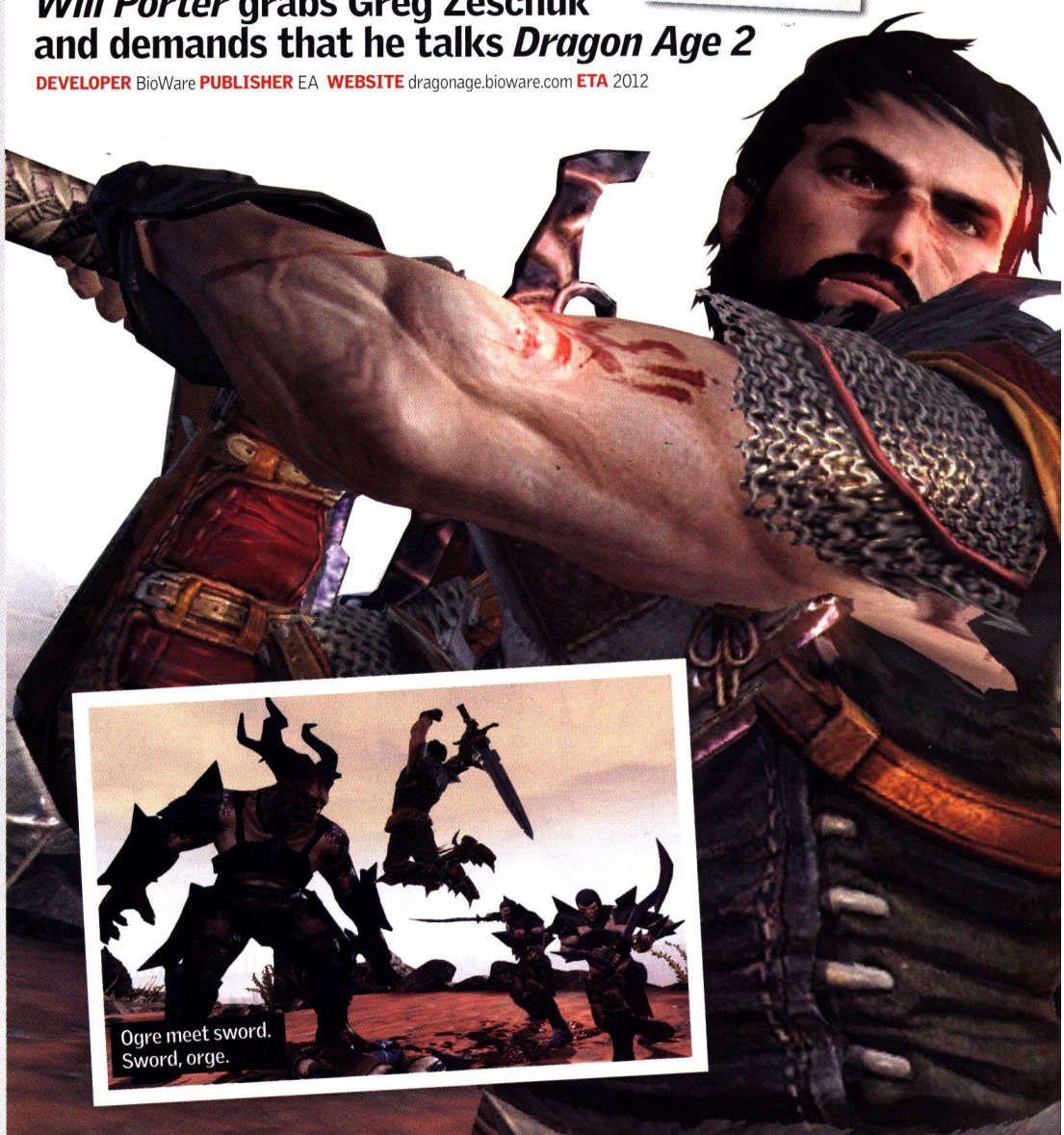
CARRY ON DOCTOR



Dr Greg Zeschuk
Co-founder, BioWare

Will Porter grabs Greg Zeschuk and demands that he talks *Dragon Age 2*

DEVELOPER BioWare **PUBLISHER** EA **WEBSITE** dragonage.bioware.com **ETA** 2012



Ogre meet sword. Sword, orge.

STOP PRESS!

MOCK THE WEAK

The makers of *Two Worlds II* have released a video deals out a bit of gentle mocking on the first game which they made: bit.ly/2worldsep2.

ONLINE AT LAST

DC Universe Online – the MMO featuring superheroes you've heard of – is finally coming out: 2 November being the date. Mark it in the diaries.

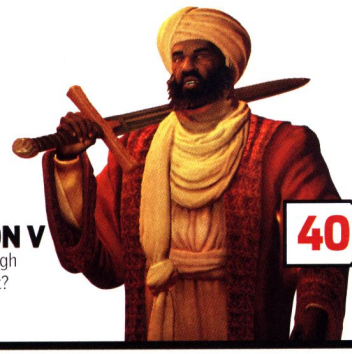
DEATH AND TAXES

Rockstar may well set *GTA V* in Hollywood – sorry Vinewood – claim some bloggers. A good or bad thing? Especially given there's a *GTA* movie in the works.

22 **CIVILIZATION V**
Has it really got enough hex appeal to be a hit?

40 **PC ZONE MEMORIAL**
Featuring disturbing cartoons and orgasmic nuns.

32 **BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY**
Giant flying rodent vs clown, part two.







BIOWARE'S EPIC FANTASY RPG *Dragon Age* built on everything the company had been doing for years, resulting in a game that'll remain a classic for years to come. But even as the devs churn out expansions for the game, they're working on making a sequel. But this time they'll be some changes.

Will Porter grabbed hold of BioWare vice-president Dr Zeschuk and demanded some answers from him, about what the second coming of *Dragon Age*.

Q So there's been an element of surprise that the '*Origins*' nature of *Dragon Age* has been ditched for a single character...

A There's a concept which we subscribe to, which is not to stand still when we develop. If the question is whether to supply more of the same or do something different, we'll often do something different.

The key thing there is that you don't really want to break what's not broken – but you also want to challenge the player. You want to take their expectations and stretch them a bit.

Another big factor is that a lot of what we do is based on the passion and desires of the team. If the team wants to go in a certain direction, and they have a rationale for it that we can buy into, then we'll do that. We think this will be a better game. It's going to be surprising and interesting.

Yet the change does still seem strange...

We don't like being formulaic is the answer, and that really is it. We usually do the right thing. And also, when you're revealing stuff about a game sometimes, the initial announcements don't make it obvious what the game's going to be like.

I drew on an example earlier: you remember the Marilyn Manson trailer for *Dragon Age*? *[That'd be* 'The New Shit' *one – Ed]* People were freaked out: "Argh! I'm freaked out! They've ruined it!". It was just us showing another dimension. Another way of saying it is that that what we're seeing right now isn't the whole picture. People have created their own conclusions, and they may change them over time.

So will all the usual NPC group mechanics still play a role?

We went away from having groups at one point, especially in *Jade Empire* when we went in solo – but then pulled in some of the side characters as we realised just how important other characters were to our experience.

"We don't look at each game as the end. It's one more chapter of the overall experience"

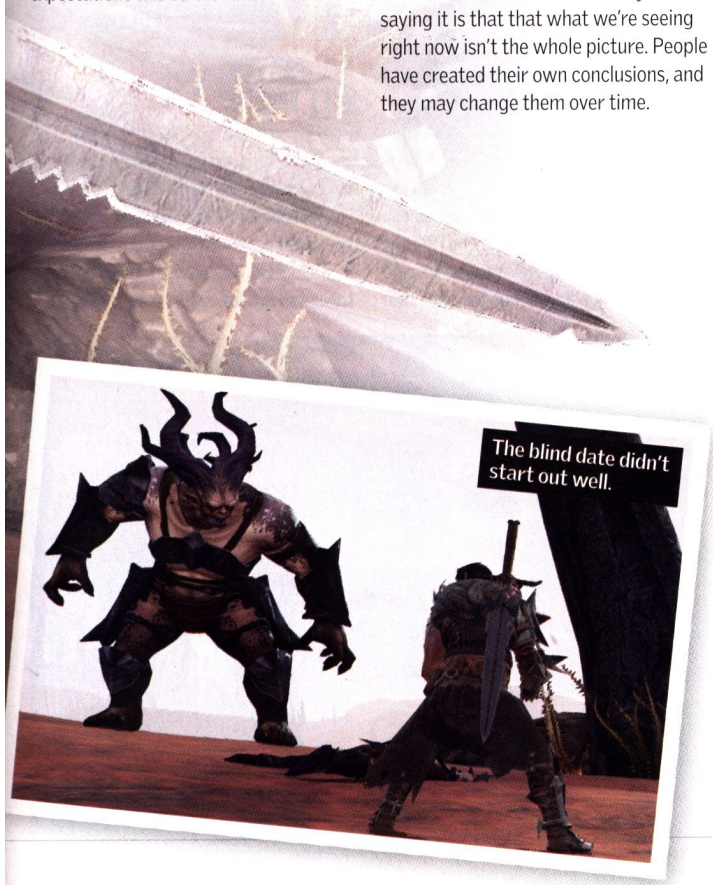
You needed them as a mirror to the world. So yes, there'll be those other characters there.

One of the reasons we spent so long developing our properties – the setting and the world – is that you can slot in stuff anywhere within it. There's absolutely going to be some stuff that's very familiar, no question about that. It's a long-term thing though, so maybe you won't see all your favourite characters – like you didn't in *Mass Effect 2*. We don't look at each game as the end. It's one more chapter, one more facet, of the overall experience.

When thinking about original BioWare material like *Dragon Age*, would you ever consider making a return to *Jade Empire*?

That's one of those tough ones, we actually talk about *Jade* fairly often. It always comes up. Of the three original properties we created, although it was not unsuccessful, it was the least successful.

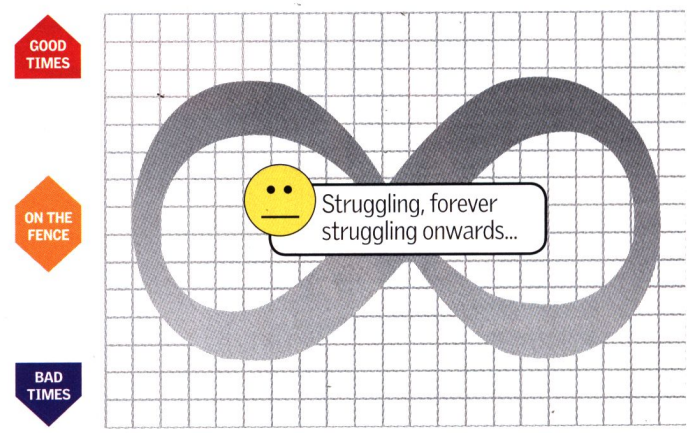
I still love it, and it's still our most artistic and moving game. It's funny, because in our meetings people are always asking "What about *Jade Empire*?" so we may very well go back some day. At some point, somehow, we'll use it. We just don't know how yet. It's still very close to all our hearts. PCZ



STUFF

There once was a game called *Enviro-Bear*, or *Enviro-Bear 2000: Operation: Hibernation* to give it its full, stupidly punctuated title. In it, you played a bear driving a car with only one paw, and your task was to fill its belly with enough fish, fruit and nuts so it could survive its hibernation. Battling with other AI bears driving vehicles, it was incredibly tough. It was also very funny. How could it not be? It was about a bear driving a car! And now, in real life, a black bear has driven a car into a tree, near Denver in the USA. And we dare say that wasn't a simulation!

LIFE IS A ROLLER COASTER



IS THE FUTURE FACEBOOK?

Will Power finds *Command & Conquer* creator Louis Castle is thinking the unthinkable...

SINCE THE FIRST *PC ZONE* appeared in 1993 how we buy and play games has changed a lot. Our purchases from Electronics Boutique switched to online stores, which are now usurped by *Steam*. Floppy discs begat CD-ROMs which begat DVDs. The shareware releases of *Doom* and *Duke Nukem 3D* evolved into the mega-hits of today. Right now, the big get bigger, the small get worthier and the middle falls away.

Someone who has watched this process from the inside with mounting worries is Louis Castle, the godfather of *Command & Conquer* and co-founder of legendary PC developer Westwood.

"This is a hits-driven business. What I see happening is teams continually condensing to fewer and fewer teams of more and more people as everyone's chasing that big hit. Everyone's chasing *Call of Duty*," explained Castle during his keynote lecture at this year's Develop Conference in Brighton. "The problem I see occurring with that is there are fewer new ideas. Really, we're becoming the worst of what Hollywood did before the independent film festivals."

NEW MODEL

What's more, when he met up with *PC ZONE* before taking the stage, he confided that he felt his own creation – *Command & Conquer* – had been adversely affected by the hit-chasing necessities of modern-day publishing.

"I think it's like so many other franchises, if you can't be number one through 10 in the charts it's difficult to justify spending the kind of money that competes with the games that can," he replies, when asked about the current status of Kane and his tiberium troubles.

"The publishing and distribution model is broken and fails the industry"



Microtransactions! The future!

"Sadly it becomes a victim of the hits-driven industry. I think the team that did the last *C&C* are really talented people. I've worked with them on several other games and they did very well with the resources they had at hand. But they just didn't have the sorts of resources that you would need to be competing with a *COD* or *Medal of Honor*. Games cost so much money, so many resources...

"Right now I'm on a bit of a mission for the industry, to show that there are other ways to do this. You don't have to ride this bricks-and-mortar distribution model into the ground. I don't want to see the *COD*s and the *Crysis 3*s ceasing to exist because the publishing and distribution model is broken and fails the industry. The hits are still being made, the biggest hits, but the ones that make money now are going to be so very, very few. For me, I want to keep making those kinds of games – no-one else has a solution to get to digital distribution, so I said 'Hell, I'll go do it.'"

HIT RACE

Castle reckons that the double threat of second-hand sales and piracy are forcing publishers into a mega-hit arms race, and isn't convinced by the still-specialist nature of direct download services like *Steam* when it comes to the mass market, which still involves









learning about a game, buying it, waiting for it to download and then finally having a play. As such, he's turning his attention elsewhere.

Castle's company, InstantAction (instantaction.com), provides browser games that can be played on whatever webpage a link has been embedded into: whether a personal blog, a games site or a post on Facebook.

If you already know of the company, it'll be from *Fallen Empire: Legions*, the impressive *Tribes*-esque game that was part of the allure for Castle joining the company in the first place.

NO-CASH PAY

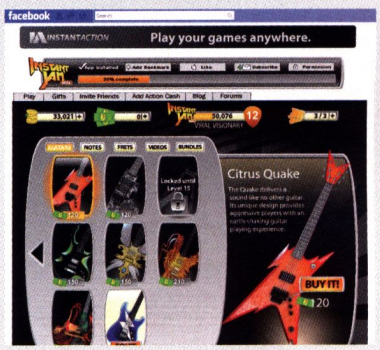
As established PC gamers it's easy to scoff at the notion of free-to-play browser games, but there's little doubt that *InstantJam* (Castle's imminent free-to-play *Guitar Hero*... erm... tribute) is a concoction of extremely clever ideas and smart audience targeting.

What's more, Castle is convinced that once he's converted everyone to the religion of free-to-play and social media tie-ins, he can reopen the door on AAA mega-hits as a returning conquering hero.

"It's right in front of us, but we've discounted it because of the kind of experience the games offer. If Facebook offered *Call of Duty*, then maybe we'd have paid attention. The future is, discover the content, share it with friends, try it for free, and then pay if it's what I want.

WE'RE JAMMIN', INSTANT JAMMIN'

Guitar Hero on the PC for free (but BYO guitar)



InstantJam is a *Guitar Hero*-style game, but the difference is that you play the game over music you already own. There'll be 2,000 note charts waiting online to liberally drape themselves over popular songs in your music library and if there's something else you fancy playing ,then a click-through will find you at the Amazon store to buy the song.

The *Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero* libraries so far only have 1,000 songs, so through careful navigation of copyright laws free-to-play *InstantJam* have them trumped, but does it play as well? For a novice player like myself, it seems so. There's less on-screen pyrotechnics, but once you've plugged in your existing USB guitar it feels accurate and fun.

Better still, songs with more of a local bias (hello Britpop) will be featured, something that simply isn't profitable on the existing brands.

You earn in-game currency as you play and level up, but top-ups and bonus items and themes can be bought with microtransactions. The more challenges you enter into with your friends and the more you spread the word about the game, the more rewarded you'll be in-game.

"We're really encouraging music purchases, and there's benefits to it as you earn points towards things," explains Lou Castle. "We're saying that we know that as a consumer... piracy isn't about avoiding playing a dollar so much, it's because it's easier to get the music from a pirate site, so why pay that dollar?

"We say, well here's this game you can play for free and you get all these benefits within the game for buying music. Be a good sport, buy the music, it's worth it. Our goal is to change people's shopping behaviours."

In time we're promised other instruments, and simultaneous playthroughs with online friends are going to be looked into, but right now it's all about the ever-increasing song library. Play *Freebird*!

"We have to change the offer to players, not the games.

"It's weird, I'm going to a market most associate with low budgets to fix the distribution model so I can go back to making games with big budgets."

When *PC Zone* first appeared it was into a burgeoning PC scene of mail-order, shareware and floppy discs in which the likes of id, Apogee (now 3D Realms) and Epic made themselves kings with the likes of *Doom*, *Duke Nukem* and *Jazz Jackrabbit*, and went on to dominate PC gaming for the next two decades.

Next came the CD-ROM and the ever-more densely packed cover discs that, in truth, made this magazine ever more of a success, then beyond that Amazon, DVDs and, lurching into the foreground, the rise of the internet. As the world went online PC gaming embraced: *Steam*, the burgeoning undercurrent of indie gaming, the resurgence of casual play, the switch to

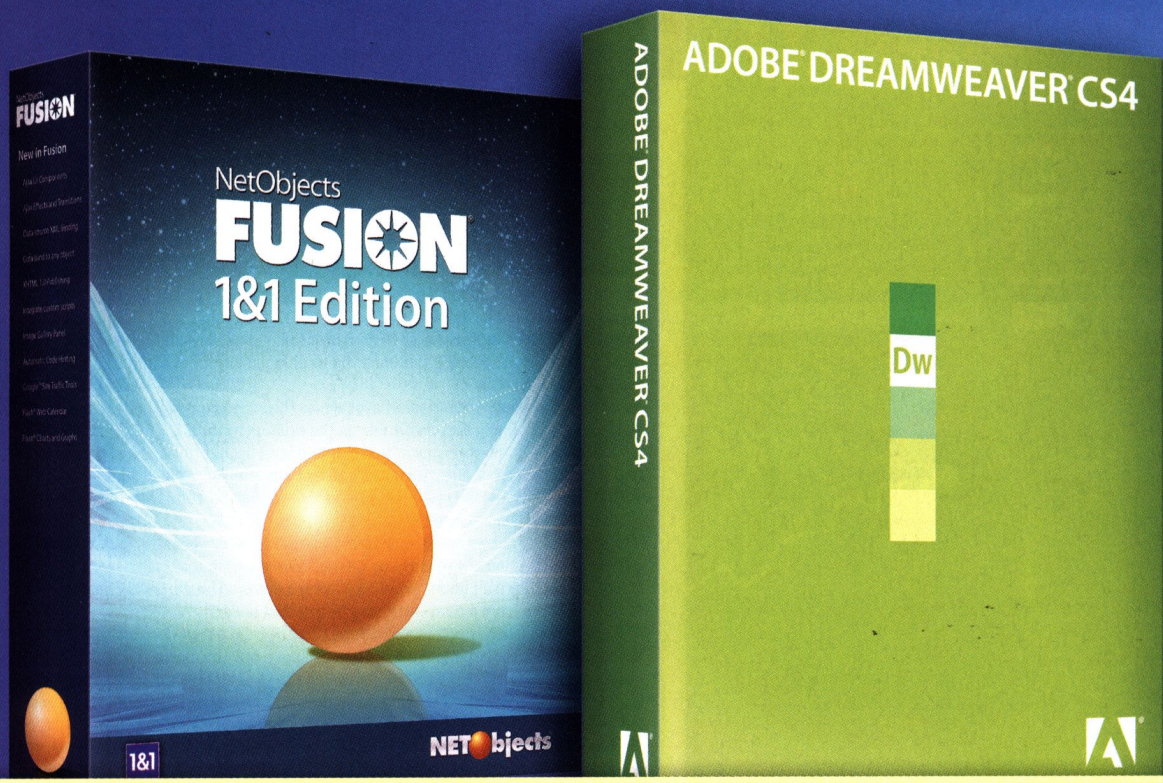


gaming on permanent publisher-held servers and it eventually began to abandon lovely paper magazines like us.

In short, PC gaming has changed beyond recognition since *PC ZONE* first came onto the scene and, according to people like Lou Castle, it's about to change even more. We're not going to be around to guide you through its stormy and exciting waters anymore, but perhaps you won't need us, you'll see what's good because your friends will have clicked the 'Like' button... PCZ

JOIN THE 1&1 MOBILE REVOLUTION AND

WEBSITES



SOFTWARE FOR FREE!*

INCLUDED WITH 1&1 HOSTING PACKAGES

NetObjects Fusion® is a powerful website design application to easily build sophisticated sites. Beginners to advanced users can experience the benefits of professional quality design without writing a single line of code. The exclusive 1&1 Edition includes mobile templates for optimal handheld viewing and navigation.

Adobe® Dreamweaver® CS4 is a sophisticated website design application for creating professional websites. Dreamweaver® includes the Adobe Device Central module which enables web designers to test their websites on mobile devices by emulating the latest smartphones.

To find out more turn over or visit us on www.1and1.co.uk.

MEMBER OF united internet

* Special offers as of 01/09/2010 and for a limited time only. Software available as download from 1&1 Control Panel; please turn page for details and prices of 1&1 web hosting packages. Terms and Condition
** Calls cost 6p per minute from a BT landline, calls from other operators and mobiles may be higher.

AKE YOUR WEBSITE TO THE MOBILE MASSES

GO MOBILE

More and more people are browsing the web on the go with their BlackBerry, iPhone or smartphone devices. We give you the software to create an additional website that is optimised for mobile viewing so anyone can view your site wherever they are.



- ✓ **Layouts, designs and wizards enhanced for mobile phones**
- ✓ **Convert existing websites to be mobile compatible**
- ✓ **Supports latest smartphones**

1&1

Call **0871 641 21 21**** or visit us now **www.1and1.co.uk**

see website for further details.

JON 'LOG' BLYTH...

FIGHTING PC ZONE'S DEMISE



Every industry has its filthy euphemisms. There are good euphemisms, take *Smash Hits* which used "coming down with a summer cold" to mean "off their tits". This was their way to let their loyal and knowing fans pick up on celebrity drug references, without upsetting the wide-eyed Wham! fans and the clueless old farts who spawned them.

That, of course, was before *Smash Hits* entered a second, more sinister euphemism, "a period of consultation". It's a euphemism that begins with the phrase, "*Smash Hits* cannot continue in its current form" and ends with an empty bay of desks. By the time you read this, *PC ZONE* will just such a bay of desks. My seat will be occupied by a coyote, trying to gain nourishment by eating the bits of ham panini and fingernails that slid into my keyboard over the years.

A "period of consultation" is part euphemism, and part legal requirement. It's an invitation to come before the elder council and offer desperate, alternate forms the magazine could take. It's neither pessimistic nor bitter to suggest that these are never picked up, it's just common sense. Ideas that are within the imagination of the money men will have already been rejected. And anything that isn't obvious will be dismissed as an unacceptable risk. Especially for a mag like *PC ZONE*, which – to coin a new euphemism – has excelled in increasing its quality:readership ratio, through not getting worse as quickly as it lost readers.

But what ideas did we throw into the void? It's with leaden fingertips that I present my last-ditch pitches for a *PC ZONE* renaissance. I'll try to finish before they wrestle my keyboard from me and kick me into the street.

1. THE RUSSELL T DAVIES FOLK MEMORY METHOD

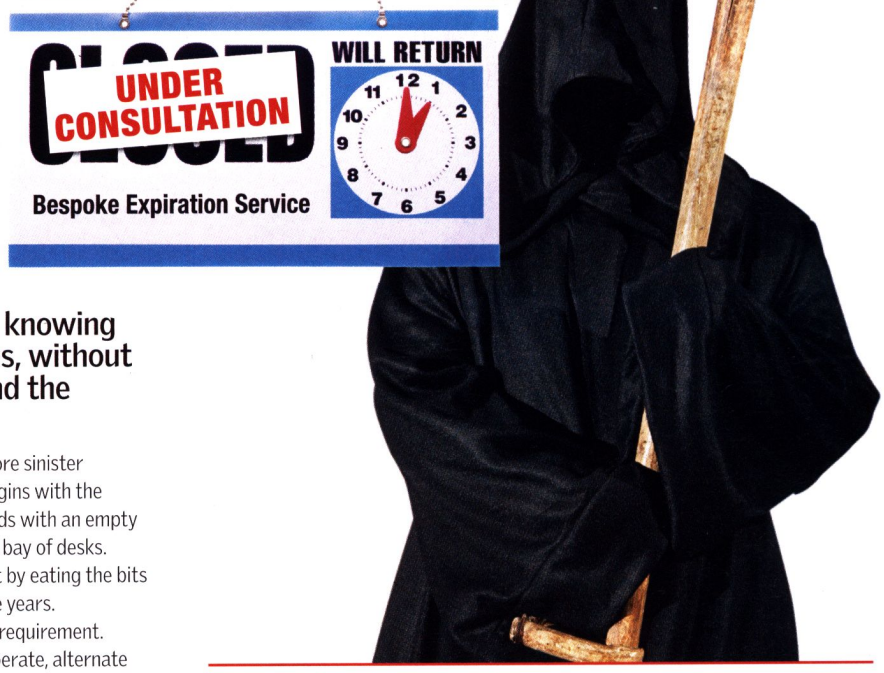
In this form, *PC ZONE* will be redistributed in whispers around a camp fire. Reprising the role of the Doctor's companion Martha Jones, I will tour the world, telling everyone about the time the Charlie Brooker ate his own arse, and six years later everyone will say, "Oh yes, I remember *PC ZONE*, it used to be good in the '90s," and the universe will explode.

2. PRINTED ON T-SHIRTS

While people will often complain about the added value that a DVD really offers in this era of 50GB broadband and "internet hyperlinks", one thing that the swivel-chair bound PC gamer will always need is T-shirts. This also means that a review of *Need For Speed: World* will sell for around £12.

3. A SHEET OF SWEAR STICKERS, FREE WITH PC GAMER

Instead of the expense of maintaining the once-proud cow that is *PC ZONE*, why not reduce it to a sheet of tonally appropriate stickers? So, when you read *PC Gamer* and a rogue "OMG!" offends your mature sensibilities, simply cover it up with a classically *PC ZONE* exclamation, like "pisslord" or "nun-spunk".



"It's with leaden fingertips that I present my last-ditch pitches for a *PC ZONE* renaissance"

4. A MECHANICAL CHINA DOLL

Simply buy this internet-enabled porcelain creature with a whirring robotic jaw, and it will mime along to our voices as we howl ravenously into our webcams. When we drop into a silent slump from hunger and bellowing, the doll will sense this, and recite your favourite reviews and adverts from years gone by, with an air of demonic threat. Nod approvingly as Mark Burgess awards *The Complete Chess System* a generous 80%, and cower in terror as her pottery eyes spurt a pungent red liquid across your bedroom.

5. A GOOGLE DOC PRESENTATION

Sounds ridiculous? Work has already begun on issue 226 of *PC ZONE*, which you can view at bit.ly/pcz_226. Sure, access to the new games will be a bit of a problem, but you can usually guess what's going on from the screenshots, anyway. In fact, *PC ZONLINE* will be the first online *PC ZONE* magazine to publish in-depth reviews on the basis of a couple of screenshots that may or may not be of the game in question.

I've just had the call and been told that my ideas have been rejected. I've also been asked to stop standing outside the CEO's office with my trousers around my ankles. I love you. Follow me on Twitter. I'm @disappointment. If I get a couple of followers out of this, the last 17 years will have been worth it. PCZ

BIG SAVINGS
ON PROFESSIONAL WEB SOLUTIONS

With 1&1 now you don't only get professional software for FREE but you can also save 50% on web hosting for the first 6 months!

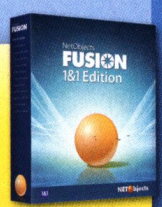
NOW GET 50% OFF AND FREE SOFTWARE!*

1&1 HOME PACKAGE

- 1 .uk domain included
- NEW: 10 GB Web Space
- UNLIMITED Traffic
- NEW: 1,500 IMAP/POP3 E-Mail Accounts
- NEW: 1,500 Online-Office Accounts
- NEW: 1 Database
- NEW: PHP5 incl. Zend Framework, PHP6 (beta), Perl
- NEW: NetObjects Fusion® 1&1 Edition

~~£4.99~~ per month

£2.49 per month for the first 6 months*

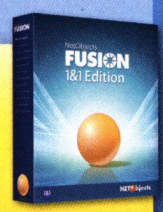


1&1 BUSINESS PACKAGE

- 3 .uk domains included
- NEW: 40 GB Web Space
- UNLIMITED Traffic
- NEW: 3,000 IMAP/POP3 E-Mail Accounts
- NEW: 3,000 Online-Office Accounts
- NEW: 10 Databases
- NEW: PHP5 incl. Zend Framework, PHP6 (beta), Perl,Python, Ruby
- NEW: SSH Access
- NEW: NetObjects Fusion® 1&1 Edition

~~£8.99~~ per month

£3.99 per month for the first 6 months*



1&1 PROFESSIONAL PACKAGE

- 10 .uk domains included
- NEW: 250 GB Web Space
- UNLIMITED Traffic
- NEW: 10,000 IMAP/POP3 E-Mail Accounts
- NEW: 10,000 Online-Office Accounts
- NEW: 200 Databases
- NEW: PHP5 incl. Zend Framework, PHP6 (beta), Perl,Python, Ruby
- Dedicated SSL Certificate
- Power Plus for Typo3
- NEW: Choose from NetObjects Fusion® 1&1 Edition or Adobe® Dreamweaver® CS4

~~£24.99~~ per month*

£11.99 per month for the first 6 months*



DOMAIN OFFERS:

.eu domains only £0.99 first year*

.co.uk domains only £2.49 first year*

For more fantastic offers please go to www.1and1.co.uk

1&1

MEMBER OF united internet

Call **0871 641 21 21**** or visit us now

www.1and1.co.uk

* Special offers as of 01/09/2010 and for a limited time only. 12 month minimum contract term applies for special offers on web hosting packages. Software available as download from 1&1 Control Panel. Special offer price on .eu and .co.uk domains applies for the first year of registration, subsequent years will be charged at standard price. Terms and Conditions apply, please see website for further details. Prices exclude VAT.

** Calls cost 6p per minute from a BT landline, calls from other operators and mobiles may be higher.

ETA 24 SEPT 2010

KENNETH CLARK'S LEGACY LIVES ON...

CIVILIZATION V

***David Brown* just had his capital city nuked by Gandhi...**

DEVELOPER Firaxis **PUBLISHER** 2K Games **WEBSITE** civilization.com **PREVIOUSLY IN** Issue 219



Barbarians are a pest, but a good source of XP.



THE LOWDOWN

- ✓ New combat
- ✓ Animated leaders
- ✓ Social policies
- ✓ Hexes!
- ✓ Just one more turn...
- ✗ Will destroy your social life

SID MEIER'S GOT a lot to answer for, whole generations falling under the thrall of his ludicrously addictive culture-'em-up.

You can kind of tell just how much people love the *Civilization* games just by looking at the reaction to the news it was ditching square tiles for hexagons. You don't get many people talking about hexes these days, but when Sid adopts them, they suddenly get all kinds of attention. Hexagons, seriously.

Really though, their implementation has been seamless, if the build we've been playing is anything to go by. They've given the game a more interesting strategic feel, with more realistic boundaries to your empire and a more sophisticated movement system. Most importantly, shorelines are less jagged. It affects combat too, which is perhaps what's been changed the most since *Civilization IV*.

NO PILE-UPS

First of all, gone are the super-stacks. Only one combat unit can occupy a hex at any one time (with Settlers slinking inside as well, if needed) so you'll be fighting with less units than you'll have been used to. Like any hex-based strategy, positioning your units effectively is the key, to the point where battle lines and flanking manoeuvres come into play.

This is unheard of for a *Civ* game, where the combat has been one of the least fun elements. Now, someone who used to eschew fighting might find themselves using it as an option more often than ever before, simply because it doesn't involve just building up a ludicrous stack of tanks and then steamrollering your way through the enemy. The positioning of cities has always been important, but now it is

"Gone are the super-stacks. Only one combat unit can occupy a hex"

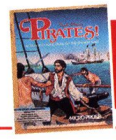
THE STORY SO FAR...

SID MEIER: A HISTORY



F-15 STRIKE EAGLE
One of the first ever combat flight sims.

1985



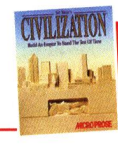
PIRATES!
Swashbuckling, governor's daughter-marrying brilliance.

1987



RAILROAD TYCOON
Only Meier could make hauling cargo fun.

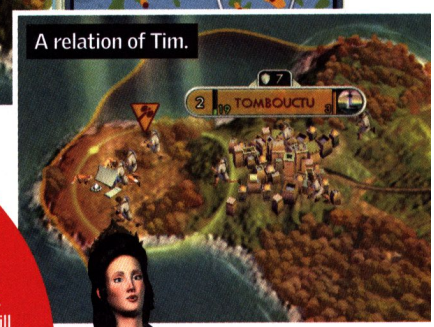
1990



CIVILIZATION
aka *History Simulator*. Sid Meier, we salute your visionary games.

1991







THE ART OF INTELLIGENCE

Everyone moans about AI, often without knowing what it actually means in game terms. In *Civilization V*, it means four things, as there will be four separate brains working behind the scenes to keep things ticking over. These will be Operational (the big combat picture), Tactical (individual units), Strategic (day-to-day empire running) and Grand Strategic (planning how the AI civilisation is going to win). Combined, all these artificial minds will make your enemies behave more authentically than in any previous game. It's ambitious, but it might just work.



vital. If you can get a front-line city into an area where you can bottleneck the enemy, he can only deploy one or two units at a time, severely limiting his effectiveness.

Two other big things affect combat, the first being ranged attacks. No longer are archers only used for defence, as their new ability to shoot enemies from a distance makes them lethal when screened by spearmen.

The other big thing is that, with the right tech advance, any land unit can transform into a set of boats and move over stretches of shallow water, meaning no more stupid ferrying about of tiny numbers of units. Overseas invasions are now much easier to set up, although when in their 'embarked' form, the land units are incredibly easy to kill, so you'll still need to protect them with a navy.

This is just scraping the surface of the new combat system, and there's still so much more to cover. *Civ* is a game of so many separate elements, it's impossible to properly analyse them in two pages, instead I'll focus on some of the things that jumped out at me.

City States are a new addition, these are small regional factions that you can ally with, or crush. Do the former and they'll provide assistance in battles, plus constantly give you gifts and bonuses, depending on their status. Genoa once gave me a catapult, for instance.

ENDLESS NAMELESS

Bigger empires are now represented by fully animated characters, rather than the talking heads of yesteryear, with more diplomatic options and, it seems, a more realistic approach to how things work in that sphere. There aren't so many civilisations to pick when starting a game, but each leader speaks in their native language, and there'll be more available in DLC packs. Neither is there a pimpable Palace to play about with, nor a 'Sid' level of difficulty. Civics have been replaced by culture-based social choices, a tree system where you spend culture points to unlock new abilities.

There's so much more to *Civilization V* than the few little things we've talked about here. There's been no chance to talk about research pacts, the way barbarians work now, and all the other tiny yet brilliant touches *Civ* is known for. The core new ingredients all seem to work well, seamlessly integrated into a traditional *Civ* experience. It's *Civilization*, both as we don't and do know it, and it looks like it'll still be utterly, utterly brilliant fun. PCZ


A bit of Force Repulse.

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH TWO...

STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED II

ETA 26 OCT 2010

Steve Hill gets both hands on a lightsaber...

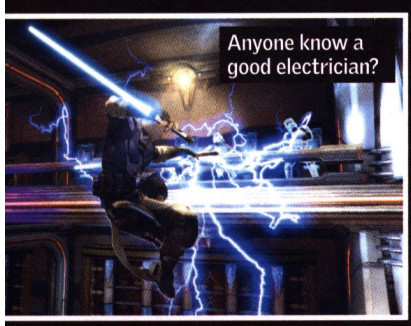
DEVELOPER LucasArts/Aspyr **PUBLISHER** Activision **WEBSITE** unleashed2010.com

WHILE IT'S TRUE that *PC ZONE* is no more, the *Star Wars* franchise still appears to have some legs. Who knew?

With the possible exception of *Empire Strikes Back*'s 30th birthday, *The Force Unleashed II* is the big event on the *Star Wars* calendar this year, and is being treated as such with the hype machine delivering a novel, a comic, and this moribund preview.

The Force Unleashed II takes place between the two film trilogies, telling the story of Starkiller, Darth Vader's Sith apprentice. At the end of the first game Starkiller was left for dead after being slapped around by Darth Vader and The Emperor. Now, the reason you see him on these pages is because he's a clone. That's what Vader tells him anyway. But how can a clone have memories, feelings, fragile human flesh, and dreams about Juno Eclipse, the lass Starkiller fancied in the first game? Besides, *Star Wars* Lore says Jedi can't be cloned. All this means poor Starkiller gets so confused he blows a hole in his cell with his mind and leaps out.

This is where you come in, taking control of Starkiller as he freefalls groundwards, dodging objects or simply blasting them out of the way with his overclocked Force powers. It's a suitably dramatic start to a chapter called Escape From Kamino which, enthusiasts of *Episode II* will know, is where the Emporer's lot did a load of cloning.


Anyone know a good electrician?

SPOILER ALERT

Starkiller eventually does escape – in Vader's TIE Fighter no less – and makes his way to Cato Neimoidia, effectively the Las Vegas of the *Star Wars* universe. It's there that you face the biggest monster ever seen in a *Star Wars* game in the shape of Baron Tarko's Gorog, which is your foe in one of *TFU2*'s epic multi-stage boss levels.

Picking up your mate, General Kota, you explain that you're perplexed about the cloning thing, and he suggests that you sod off and get your head together. For some reason you decide to head to a swamp planet called Dagobah, where introducing a classic iconic character they are.

You guessed it, that green twat Yoda is waiting for you, still feigning wisdom with his backward jive, "Brought you here the galaxy has..."

This continues with the introduction of Boba Fett, who Vader dispatches to hunt down Juno Eclipse, confident in the knowledge that you'll trail her around like a lovesick puppy.

Ultimately the story is merely an excuse to knock seven bells out of the Empire's finest, and that is exactly what we did, decimating the population of Kamino in one sitting.



MIND GAMES

The dual lightsaber wielding is a joy, particularly when you throw them and simultaneously behead a pair of hapless stormtroopers. We also enjoyed the newly instigated Jedi Mind Trick, which caused one stormtrooper to launch himself out of a closed window. Pleasingly, using it on a larger group causes them to turn on each other.

Elsewhere, Force Fury multiplies your powers and modifies them in more imaginative ways; the melee combat is now more intense; and graphically the game's had a complete overhaul. There's also a new Challenge Mode, essentially a series of mini-games with online leaderboards and the like.

All lovely stuff, the only question is whether it'll work on PC (we played it on 360) when it's so obviously a console game. But what do we care? The reaper is at the door... PCZ

THE LOWDOWN

- ✓ Iconic characters
- ✓ Stunning visuals
- ✓ Improved melee
- ✓ New challenge mode
- ✗ Console bent

MOUSEKILLER
The PC unleashed



Will PC gamers be able to play *The Force Unleashed II* with a mouse and keyboard, or should they invest in an Xbox 360 pad? We asked producer Brett Rector.

"I haven't played the PC version," confessed Brett, "But I know that there's going to be a full suite of commands, everything you'd ever expect. It's the same game, same story, same motivation for the player. I'd definitely recommend buying it. Myself, I'm a console gamer so even if there's a PC version of a certain game I'm more comfortable playing it on console." Well...

THE STORY SO FAR...

SHIT TRILOGY



THE PHANTOM MENACE
Jar Jar Binks violates childhood memories.

1999



ATTACK OF THE CLONES
More like *Dawson's Creek In Space.*

2002



REVENGE OF THE SITH
Younglings? Did they actually say that?

2005

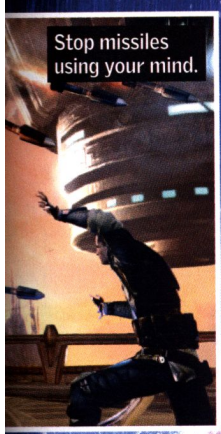


THE FORCE UNLEASHED II
So what happens to Dastardly Darth next?

2010



Stormtroopers are predictably moronic.



Stop missiles using your mind.

"That green twat Yoda is waiting for you"

HITMAN 5

Come in Number 47, your time is up

DEVELOPER IO Interactive **PUBLISHER** Square Enix **ETA** December 2011

RUMOURED FOR RELEASE by Eidos next Christmas (alongside a Lara Croft reboot if industry gossip is to be believed) with *Hitman 5* Io Interactive will pretty much be off the leash.

The crowd technology in *Hitman: Blood Money* was technically impressive and the game itself was excellent, yet it was released at that curious time when it had to straddle both an elderly console generation and the young pups that were the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3.

With the new title so long in development we can expect great things from the game engine, improved gun mechanics from *Kane & Lynch* and in all probability (going from what every other third-person game does) bits where you slide into cover. WP



Agent 47 will return, and not soon enough.

WHAT'S COMING UP

This is it: the final countdown... to the games of the future! Only from here on you'll have to do the counting on your own, as we won't be around to help you. Be strong. You can do it. Deep breath now...

WARHAMMER 40,000: SPACE MARINE

Frankly, it's about bloody time!

DEVELOPER Relic Entertainment **PUBLISHER** THQ **ETA** 2011



Ryanair's latest budget offering.

WHEN IT COMES to far off futures, there can't be many as bleak than the one predicted by the warped minds at Games Workshop.

On the often squalid, at best austere planets of the Imperium, humanity fights to control the threat from the Warp where gods and demons feed on the fear and distrust between men, ratlings, stunties and all the other races transposed from *Warhammer*'s pseudo-medieval fantasy realm.

HARD MEN

Thankfully, to protect humanity from the creatures of the Warp and other aliens like the Orks and Eldar, there are the Space Marines. Genetically altered humans, dressed in power armour, these are the Emperor's own special forces, and in *Space Marine* we'll be able to take direct control of them for the first time in a third-person action game.

Developed by the studio behind the *Dawn of War* series, we can expect to be able to direct the efforts of a squad as they fight to capture a forge word recently attacked by Orks. Relic have yet to reveal a full list of enemies and weapons, but we can certainly expect to be able to jump into ranks of enemy troops and remove a few limbs with chainswords. Standard-issue bolters and Devastator weaponry will able be available, with new equipment becoming unlocked as the campaign progresses.

There's no news on what the multiplayer options will be. In fact we've only recently had it confirmed the game is coming to PC. Let's hope Relic give it the necessary shine that PC gamers hope for and expect when it becomes available early next year. RS



There's no grey here. Just lots of brown.

GTA V

LA riots on the horizon?

DEVELOPER Rockstar
PUBLISHER Rockstar **ETA** 2012

WE HAVEN'T BEEN to Vinewood since CJ hung out with various rappers and actresses in Los Santos, the LA-inspired city we visited in the sprawling map of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*.

Now the rumour mill (hopefully not confused by Rockstar's upcoming console crime game *LA Noir*) is insisting we'll be revisiting Vinewood's giant white sign, liberally sprinkled sports cars and vacuous model types.

In fact, of the rumours are true, then missions based on TV station *Weazel's Vinewood C**ts* and *America's Next Top Hooker* seem likely... WP



A Vinewood c**t, yesterday.

SCIVELATION

1984: the videogame (again)

DEVELOPER Black Wing Foundation **PUBLISHER** TopWare **ETA** Late 2011

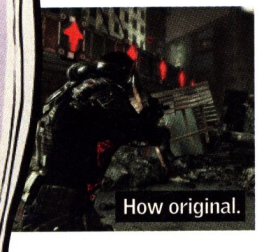
REVEALED IN EARLY 2008 under the name *Salvation* and featuring a nonsensical story that about cloning and subsequent execution of Jesus and the Antichrist in order to get people all lathered up for world war, we have to assume that *Scivelation* is pretty much the same game, albeit with a new name.

Originally running under the Source engine game and now using Unreal Tech 3, the game is inspired by the dystopics like George Orwell's *1984*. Not the year, because that would be horrible, bur rather the novel that would inspire a decade of reality TV.

SOUNDS FAMILIAR

In *Scivelation* players are part of a resistance movement fighting against their totalitarian overlords called The Regime.

Undoubtedly through various dank and depressing levels we will be fighting the agents of said Regime until hope for a brighter future is restored. You read it here first. RS



How original.



Yeah, yeah. Seen it before.

Text by Mike Channell, Will Porter and Richie Shoemaker

SANCTIMONIA

Currently scratching around for funds, this MMO aims to introduce a more complex society than most online gank-fests by adding a system of law enforcement to avoid griefing. It'll include real-time combat, the ability to knock opponents unconscious then tie them up and the opportunity to, erm, write legal documents. Sounds like work experience at a law firm to us. Particularly the tying up bit. **MC**

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: RED RIVER

Back to the front line

DEVELOPER Codemasters **PUBLISHER** Codemasters **ETA** 2011

THIS SERIES IS one that will always be forgiven its sins. Even though sticking your head in a box full of crickets on *I'm A Celebrity* is a less buggy experience than playing any *OpFlash*, we're prepared to let it slide because of the sheer scale and ambition they always demonstrate.

Red River might be the first in the series to have attainable goals, a case in point being the abolition of competitive multiplayer in favour of a co-op focus.

The action shifts to a more contemporary warzone – Tajikistan, which has similar terrain to neighbouring Afghanistan, and is nestles next to China.

Needless to say, what starts off as a routine peacekeeping mission kicks off into a full-scale conflict that includes insurgents and the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). During the game you'll find yourself traipsing along the titular tributary and trying to avoid getting headshot from four miles away.

Codies is promising there'll be more personality all round this time, with the aesthetic described as authentically cool. For a start, your gear won't be factory fresh any more – Rifles will be held together with bits of string, duct tape, chewing gum, uncooked spaghetti, human hair (body), violently unstable dark matter, sea sponges and EZ-Cheeze. Similarly the grunts themselves will have proper identities as well, meaning they'll be all the more unforgivable when they accidentally sprint across your line of fire. Something that Codies assures us they will no longer do.

"If *Red River* is broadly bug-free it'll be a fascinating game"

If *Red River* is broadly bug-free it'll be a fascinating game but, we'll probably forgive it if things go strange again. Sort of like how you don't chastise an idiot toddler who does something stupid yet simultaneously hilarious because you're too busy creasing up with laughter. MC



Modelling the latest in counter-insurgency wear.



Could be great, or could scar childhoods.

JURASSIC PARK AND BACK TO THE FUTURE

Of Flux Capacitors and Velociraptors...

DEVELOPER Telltale Games **PUBLISHER** Telltale Games **ETA** 2011

HAVING GIVEN FRESH life to the adventure game franchises that gave so many gamer formative years meaning, TellTale are taking on the films that defined a million childhoods.

How their episodic *Jurassic Park* will work is as yet unknown, but the smart money with *Back to the Future* is that it'll work in the same manner as *Day of the Tentacle*: with the player changing things in the past, then watching the future morph into something deranged.

With both games, this could be the point where the evolved structure of the traditional adventure enter the mega-franchises of the mainstream. WP



"Oh, I'm really soooo scared."

F.E.A.R. 3

Chills and thrills (maybe)

DEVELOPER Day 1 Studios **PUBLISHER** Disney Interactive **ETA** 2010

WE DO LIKE it when a game puts a willy up us, preferably multiple willies. Give or take the odd expansion, *FEAR* has consistently done just that with that creepy child Alma (now much older and with child) filling our heads with inferred visions of horror.

The second game didn't really bring anything new to the party, not even a mix tape, but it did keep the door open for greater things to come and we're hoping *FEAR 3* will be the game to provide it. Unfortunately the official l33t title – *F.3.A.R.* – doesn't inspire much confidence, especially as Monolith have taken a backseat role as 'consultants' on this game. Hopefully, instead they're working on a sequel to *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division* or *Blood*. (Hey, it's the last issue, we can dream!)

By way of compensation that the series has been turned over to others, horror movie legend John Carpenter is on board. You may have seen his handiwork on some of the live-action trailers. Unfortunately most of the in-game footage revealed so far has been less impressive. However, it all fits together, and we're sure it won't be as bad as our cynicism tells us. We're also told that the third game will be the conclusion to the series. RS

DIABLO III

The Devil's in the Detail

DEVELOPER Blizzard **PUBLISHER** Blizzard **ETA** 2012

IF YOU LISTENED diligently during all the huff and puff over the release of *StarCraft II*, you might've heard latent buzz of 100,000 abandoned dungeon crawl fans whinging in unison.

Spaceships and zerglings are all very well, but what about the lovely way loot springs from a chest in *Diablo III*? What about defensive walls made of zombies, tumbling masonry, fat blokes that explode into a floor of slithering snake-gut things? Where is the hack and slash we were promised back in the misty days of 2008? Whither the Barbarian? When shall the Witch Doctor create skinless mongrels then explode them next to a crowd of skellingtons?

Well, when it's done. As ever. But *Diablo III* is probably most likely to emerge at this time next year – the exact timing of which should be outlined over the course of BlizzCon in October.

Much like *StarCraft II*, *Diablo III* may not prove the future of gaming, but it will be a supremely polished and honed update of its past. It will also, no doubt, come with some fairly snazzy online options in its ties to Battle.net to make your co-op adventuring sing. WP



A stunning pluck and bite manoeuvre there.



Not the best way to skinny dip.

GUILD WARS 2

Tripping back to Tyria

DEVELOPER ArenaNet **PUBLISHER** NCSoft **ETA** 2011

REGARDLESS OF WHETHER your first choice MMO has been *EVE Online* or *World of Warcraft*, likely your backup was *Guild Wars*.

With its instanced hinterlands it wasn't strictly massively multiplayer, which is why it got a little picked on by the bigger kids in the MMO schoolyard. However with no subscription fees and plenty of urban persistence, it sold millions and so a sequel was inevitable.

This time ArenaNet are building up the back alleys and rural areas of Tyria to support the masses just as much as the gangs, hoping that *Guild Wars 2* will become the premier destination for online gamers. Set to offer more places to interact with more people, and no plans to ever charge a subscription, it's hard to see *Guild Wars 2* being anything other than another huge success.

The only question mark hanging over the game is the decision to remove a dedicated healer class. ArenaNet will instead distribute the salves and bandages between all the nine classes.

JACKS OF ALL TRADES

So far we hear about Elementalists, Rangers and Warriors – members of the scholar, adventurer and warrior professions respectively, and there are six classes we've yet to hear about.

The developers are asserting they want players to be more versatile, but those who prefer to specialise are grumbling. An end-of-year beta will hopefully calm people down a bit.

With plans to introduce a huge 'World vs World' PvP mode and a storyline based around uniting the various people of Tyria to defeat the Elder Dragons, 2011 can't come soon enough.

This hasn't been the best of years for MMOs, so here's hoping *Guild Wars 2* heralds a positive change for the genre. RS



Why *Guild Wars* is popular with teenaged boys.



Your first taste of Batman. More to come.

DC UNIVERSE ONLINE

Can the JLA take down *WOW*?

DEVELOPER SOE – Austin Southam **PUBLISHER** Sony Online Entertainment **ETA** 2 Nov

THE BAD NEWS, right from the outset, is that you can't be Batman, Superman or any of the other DC heroes. You can't even be subjugated toy boy Robin. Instead, you'll be building your own hero or villain and choosing a city to drop into, with Gotham City and Metropolis the two locations confirmed so far.

STAR VOICES

That's not to say you won't see and interact with popular characters, and there are plenty of notable faces from DC's extensive history. What's perhaps most interesting is the calibre of voice acting for the biggest names – Kevin Conroy and Mark Hamill will reprise their regular roles as Batman and The Joker, which will please fans of *Arkham Asylum*, and Adam Baldwin will play *Superman*. He was Animal Mother in *Full Metal Jacket*, and the School Principal from *Molly and Roni's Dance Party*, so we think that means he has broad appeal.

Sony Online plans for a far more rich and tactile world than most MMOs, meaning combat should have a physical effect on the environment as you hoof your chosen nemesis around. The straight combat looks slick enough, but if you want to pick up a taxi and dump it on your enemy's head that's going to be an option as well.

The world itself also looks stunning, with comic artist Jim Lee roped in to advise on the game it's hardly surprising. The Joker's hideout in Amusement Mile, in particular, wouldn't look out of place as an environment in *Arkham City*.

Most importantly, the level of customisation already sounds impressive, with a deep magic system that wouldn't seem out of place in a fantasy RPG in addition to the more standard weapons and superpowers that you'd expect in a hero game. It's going to be fascinating to watch this and *The Old Republic* go toe-to-toe for MMO players' hearts. MC


Black Adam. (Never heard of him either.)

INNERGY

Ubisoft's New Age nonsense game *Innergy* was unveiled during its E3 conference to a baffled silence. The red-haired chap in charge seemed convinced it could boost your immune system for up to six hours, just by forcing you to regulate your breathing. Bunk, we say. **MC**


TDR 2 is a sim for people who want to be Jay Kay.



The last caption about a blue car in *PC ZONE*.

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED 2

Whoah! Back to the island...

DEVELOPER Eden Games **PUBLISHER** Atari **ETA** 24 Sep

WHILE THE ORIGINAL *TDU* had a buggy release and haphazard patching, but soon developed a loyal following in love with its concept – if not entirely its execution.

The idea of zipping around an open paradise island and challenging fellow racers within its world to races continues to stir the loins of seasoned racers. Although with *TDU2* racers will be cresting the cliffs and skidding round the vomit-soaked club corners of Ibiza. Hit level 10 though and you'll unlock the updated map of Hawaii's Oahu which can accessed after a quick race to the airport.

Brilliantly, there's now a co-op mode that lets a friend sit next to you in the car and read the map (if you feel the need to recreate innumerable travel arguments with your significant other) while throughout the game there's an added emphasis on rewarding you for buying your avatar houses and posh clothes, fully exploring the vehicular playgrounds provided and making friends as well as beating them.

TROPICAL RACER

With a release currently targeted for this September the hope is that this time Eden Games have been allowed to keep *TDU2* in the oven for long enough to make it the hit it truly deserves to be.

We also hope and pray that We Are Going to Ibiza by the Vengaboys is the key-stone of the soundtrack. WP

Must be Swindon.

DIRT 3

Back to the proper thing

DEVELOPER Codemasters Southam **PUBLISHER** Codemasters **ETA** 2011

CODEMASTERS RACING STUDIO hasn't put out a bad game in years and *DiRT 3* is apparently going to be its biggest racer yet. The emphasis is firmly back on rally this time around and traditional rallying in particular, which will please those people for whom *DiRT 2*'s rock 'n' roll makeover went down like a Hindenberg full of cold sick.

You'll still be seeing Ken Block and chums whooping and incinerating their tyres but they're accompanied by European pros such as Kris Meeke and a garage full of iconic motors.

There are more challenging environments to test them in as well, with a weather system that simulates the full gamut of the average British day – rain, blizzards and oppressive gloom – and applies it to the stages.

Apparently this means greater variety during the career mode as one visit to a location might be in blazing sunshine and the next time you rock up it could be a thunderstorm in the middle of the night. The snow effects are particularly impressive, with *SEGA Rally*-style snow deformation at the sides of the icy roads.

FUN IN THE MUD

The final big addition is a Gymkhana stunt driving mode, which replicates the hugely popular Ken Block YouTube videos. Each arena has a number of obstacles in it and you're scored for performing unique manoeuvres and getting as close as possible to the prop without nuzzling it with your bumpers.

This mode ties in neatly with the ability to take a slice of any replay and export it to YouTube from within the game, even the flashback ones. Now that pride you get when you successfully scatter a million pound rally car across the countryside can be shared with other maniacs. **MC**

DUST 514

Not much is known about this FPS/MMO hybrid, other than that it will take place in the *EVE Online* universe. For years people have asked to be able to get out of their ships in *EVE*, but getting this one right will be a tough job. Let's hope the phased synchronisation between *EVE* and *Dust 514* goes smoothly. **MC**

TRON: EVOLUTION

A possibly perfect tie-in

DEVELOPER Propaganda Games **PUBLISHER** Disney Interactive **ETA** 2010

MOST GAMERS WERE brought up on *Tron*, thinking it pointed to a bright future of virtual reality and interactive entertainment, in spite of the fact neither existed except in dreams and *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks.

Eventually that future was realised some 20 years later with *Tron 2.0*, which happened to be a bloody good shooter, even if it was largely ignored by the great gaming masses.

No such problems we hope for third-person action game *Tron: Evolution* will be quickly followed up with a pacy-looking movie *TRON: Legacy,* as *Evolution* is its prequel). The danger is of course that this game is rigidly part of the movie marketing assault, which is never a good sign, although developer Propaganda Games seem aptly named to handle the pressure.

And it's going to star the voice of the original Tron himself – Bruce '*Babylon 5*' Boxleitner.

Although we are preparing for heart-crushing disappointment due to previously-mentioned movie tie-in shiteness, the inclusion of light cycles, neon-piped catsuits and the inevitable over-use of the phrase "end of line" is enough to keep our hopes high. **RS**



Dear gods woman, start eating cakes!

ETA
AUTUMN 2011



HITTING THE TOWN...

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

From a madhouse to an open city turned insane, *Jon 'Log' Blyth* follows the Bat

DEVELOPER Rocksteady Studios **PUBLISHER** Warner Bros/Square Enix **WEBSITE** arkhamhasmoved.com/uk

THE STORY SO FAR?

ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS



THEY'RE BORN
But Rocksteady haven't made a game yet, so no-one cares.

2005



URBAN CHAOS: RIOT RESPONSE
Stop mucking about, you've got a destiny.

2006

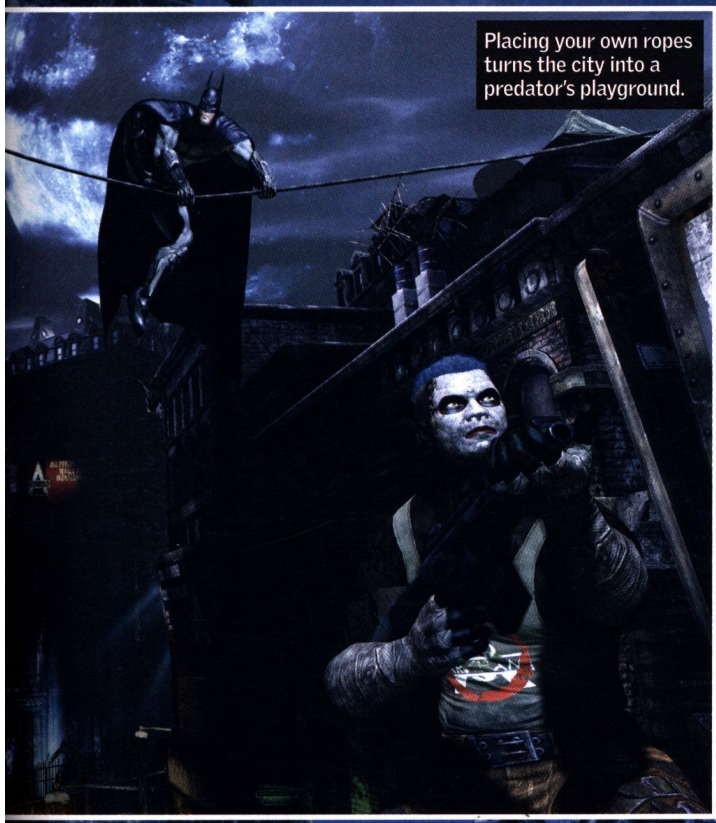


ARKHAM ASYLUM
Working with DC, they managed to capture the soul of Batman.

2009

ARKHAM CITY
Thanks to *Arkham Asylum*, expectations have never been higher...

2011



Placing your own ropes turns the city into a predator's playground.



Arkham City's epic love story begins.



No jester cap, but that hair casts a familiar silhouette.

WHEN THE FIRST round of publicity for *Arkham Asylum* came out there was the impression of a certain lack of confidence. Taken to a room in Eidos, we were shown Batman accompanying Joker into the iconic madhouse, and not much else. While it was the best opening to a game since Freeman's monorail ride, it didn't give you much of a feel for the game.

The first look at *Arkham City* showed no such timidity. It's accepted that *Arkham Asylum* was a defining moment for Batman in videogames, the first time he'd ever been done right. It was pitch perfect, sitting cheerfully alongside the beyond-black psychopathic graphic novel with which it shares its name, the commercial dark tint of the Christopher Nolan movies, and the approachable kid-friendly action of the '90s classic *The Animated Series*. Batman may be a flexible franchise, but he's got rules, and *Arkham Asylum* played within them rules with love and art.

So, having delivered the comic book look, with the scriptwriter and voices of the '90s cartoon, where do you go from there? Well, where else is there? Gotham City, stupid.

In the first game, Quincy Sharpe was the corrupt governor of the *Arkham Asylum* and he made no secret of two things: his contempt for the human rights of lawbreakers, and his plans to become mayor of Gotham.

URBAN PRISON

The events of *Arkham City* take place a year after those in *Asylum*, and Sharpe has been hard at work. Taking all the credit for Batman's work in his failed facility, he's convinced the populace that what Gotham needs to be crime-free once and for all is a super-facility bigger than any one building. So he's bringing the madhouse onto the streets.

So a large area of Gotham has been slapped with compulsory purchase orders, the residents evicted, and a wall erected. The insane supervillains of *Arkham Asylum* and the brawling thugs of Blackgate Penitentiary have all been transported into this walled area of Gotham. This is *Arkham City*, both an anarchic nightmare and a madman's dream come true.

"An anarchic nightmare and a madman's dream come true"

Presiding malevolently over *Arkham City*, with a threatening poster campaign and Tannoy announcements, is a new character (to Rocksteady's game at least) Hugo Strange. He's not on Batman's databases. Even Oracle, who once again shares your earpiece with Alfred's grounded advice, doesn't know who he is. But Strange's rule in the City is absolute, and he enforces just one law, you try to escape, you die. Beyond that, there's a laissez-faire attitude to gang violence and murder. After all, who'll you be killing? Just another scrap of lowlife detritus.

Of course, it's not that simple. The corrupt establishment of Gotham is also throwing political prisoners into *Arkham City*, and trusting the more seasoned inhabitants to deal with them. Take Jack Ryder – once a vigilante called The Creeper, now a shock-jock chat show host – his broadcasts got a little too close to Quincy and Hugo's mysterious arrangement, and Batman finds him tasting the fist end of a thug's arm.

That's the world of *Arkham City*. Watching Batman fly around, it's obvious that this is the same figure that stalked the Asylum, substantial, powerful, yet still vulnerable. His combat relies on the same simple but satisfying combination of light and heavy attacks and combos. Detective mode still lets you investigate crime scenes and see enemies through walls. And Predator mode still lets you take out crowds of armed hoods stealthily, when a full frontal assault would prove fatal. They've all been improved, but more on that later. Because now, we're going to look at the most exciting thing about this sequel.

ROAM FREE

Arkham City is an open world game. You can explore. There's a strong central mission that'll take you through the story of who Hugo Strange is, Joker's mysterious illness, Two-Face's bid to establish himself in the



The Broadcast Analyser – tune it in to Radio Luxembourg.



Obsessed with duality, mate? Bloody looks like it an' all.



Batman can fly towards explosions...



Our kind of jester.

A BIT OF SPECULATION

Talia Al Ghul is the daughter of the (supposedly) immortal crimelord Ra's Al Ghul. Stana Kalic (the one from *Castle*, who isn't Nathan Fillion) appears in the *Arkham City*'s IMDB listing as playing Talia. Meanwhile, Maurice LaMarche (*Futurama*'s Morbo) is credited as Mr Freeze, the freeze-ray wielding scientist forever fatally associated with Arnold Schwarzenegger, making two unconfirmed villains. I mentioned this to Jamie Walker, Rocksteady's Studio Director, and he made a disparaging comment about Wikipedia journalism, but failed to pull out a banner and ride around on a unicycle saying, "Talia Al Ghul and Mr Freeze do not feature in *Arkham City*," so you draw your own conclusions.

anarchic regime, and the eternal question of whether Catwoman will turn out to be a friend or foe. But the sheer number of supervillains, legendary and obscure, gives Rocksteady a chance to hide away a massive amount of optional missions. If you rush *Arkham City*, you'll miss a lot of stories.

For example, there's Victor Zsasz. You can finish the game without picking up a telephone. And if you do, you'll never know Zsasz was in the game. But that would mean you'll miss out on the serial killer's game of cat and mouse.

Detective Mode has had an overhaul, too. Now, it's not just a matter of following the stink of a cigar butt, you're more a crime scene investigator. The example we're given is pretty tame, but it shows there are possibilities.

After an assassin tries to snipe Catwoman, flipping into Detective mode lets you hunt for, and piece together, scraps of evidence. The site of the bullet's impact and the hole in the window lets us extrapolate a line across Arkham, that lets you deduce that the shot was fired from a church bell tower.

You can also investigate using your broadcast analyser, a new gadget that acts like an FBI snooping device, scouring the airwaves for keywords. More entertainingly, it also lets you manually scour frequencies for anything going on. You'll find radio stations, GCPD despatch radio, and a host of hidden bonuses that'll help you uncover a whole new set of Riddler's secrets.

FIST OF FUN

The combat system now has twice as many moves squeezed into its three simple buttons. A beatdown attack can be used to whale on one guy in an extraordinarily heavy fashion. This is

DOING THE BAD THING

Apart from The Joker (who, incidentally, has a bit of a cough) who'll Batman be up against this time?



CATWOMAN

When you meet Catwoman she's suspended over a vat of acid. But she's not screaming for her life. DC and Rocksteady's Batman universe isn't a world of weak women. They're beautiful, of course, and the modern fondness for leather costumes leads to the inevitable suspicion that this isn't a feminist kind of strength but more of a male domination fantasy.

Try telling that to Catwoman, though, she'd shove her arse in the air and whip your face off. She's constantly referring to her "nine lives", which isn't really that much to brag about. In fact, for the Batman universe, she's getting short-changed.

CALENDAR MAN

Hidden away in the basement of the courthouse, visible under the floor if you use Detective Vision, you'll see a man locked away. What kind of maniac gets locked up in a prison inside a prison? It's the lesser known villain, Calendar Man. In the comics, he was a petty crook, until *The Long Halloween* where he played a Hannibal Lecter role, tauntingly offering guidance into an investigation of a serial killer. In *Arkham City*, he can read your system's date, and tells you relevant things about it. Turn up at certain times, and you'll learn his story...

TWO-FACE

Harvey Dent's cell was all laid out in *Arkham Asylum*, but he wasn't there. In *Arkham City*, he's much keener to show his faces. Being the ex-district attorney he's taken control of the courthouse and is using Catwoman's alleged death to cement his position as one of the big players in the *City*'s anarchic regime. Like Sefton Hill says, "One of the fun things is working out how different characters would react to this situation". It's almost tailor-made for people like Dent, whose dual personality would thrive on the respect and chaos.

VICTOR ZSASZ

Serial killer and brutal fantasist Victor Zsasz had a tutorial cameo in the first game, teaching you to use your Detective view. If you race through the game, you might miss him completely this time, but if you're dedicated to exploring the side missions that fill the newly sandboxed Gotham City, you'll answer the telephone. There's a rumour going around *Arkham City* that anyone who answers a ringing telephone gets killed. It's up to you whether you answer the phone or not, but if you want to take Zsasz down, you'll have to pick up.

HUGO STRANGE

In *Arkham City*, nothing is known of Hugo Strange, except that he's working with The Joker. Even your information broker ally, Oracle (the original Batgirl, paralysed by The Joker in Alan Moore's *The Killing Joke*) doesn't know who he is.

However, he's one of Batman's oldest foes in the comics, dating back to 1940. He began using fear powder before the Scarecrow thought of wearing a sack, as a charlatan psychiatrist to Gotham's richest people he learnt many secrets, and he's one of the few villains who discovered Batman's real identity.

also the only way you'll open up armoured enemies to damage. You can use the environment to pull off acrobatic evades, and the countering system has been extended to allow for multiple blocks. And if an enemy is stunned you can pounce off him. It's the same simple system, in theory, and all these new powers mean enemies need to be a bit tougher.

The gadgetry has also been redesigned to fit the new, open world. The remote-controlled Batarang can be charged with electricity by navigating it near sparking electricity cables and can then be used to overload electrical circuits, if you manage to guide it into a control box. And the Grapple Boost transforms your humble hook into a launch pad, instead of lifting you to the ledge it sends you flying upwards, giving you an overview of the city. From this height you can soar around *Arkham City*, or dive and pick off thugs. But you can also use your gadgetry to navigate the city. Firing a rope between buildings lets you create your own paths through the sky, and half-way through zipping to a building on a grappling hook, you can slow down, fire another, and change directions completely.

SWINGING FUN

"Getting around Gotham City isn't a problem for Batman," says Sefton Hill, Rocksteady's studio director. "So we're not going to make it a problem for you."

Jamie Walker explains their attitude to skill resets, too. "We didn't want to take away the abilities you earned in the first game. So we've said, what would the villains do, what measures would they take, knowing that they were fighting a man with those powers?"

So instead of powering you down they've given the enemies the ability to deal with your powers. And opened up a whole new set of skills for you to learn. Won't this be daunting for newcomers?

"You don't have to have played the first game to get it. It's still the same, accessible system. But you'll be pulling off the stylish moves more quickly if you have," explains Walker.

The intimacy of *Arkham Asylum* could've been lost in its expansion to an effective township. But the chance to explore, coupled with a relatively small area and a high density of special events, gives you a chance to make that intimacy yours. You can get to know the streets and the gangs that are inhabiting them.

"*Arkham City* is about five times bigger than Asylum, but it's not about the size. It's about the detail," explains Walker. By keeping the area manageable, they can fill



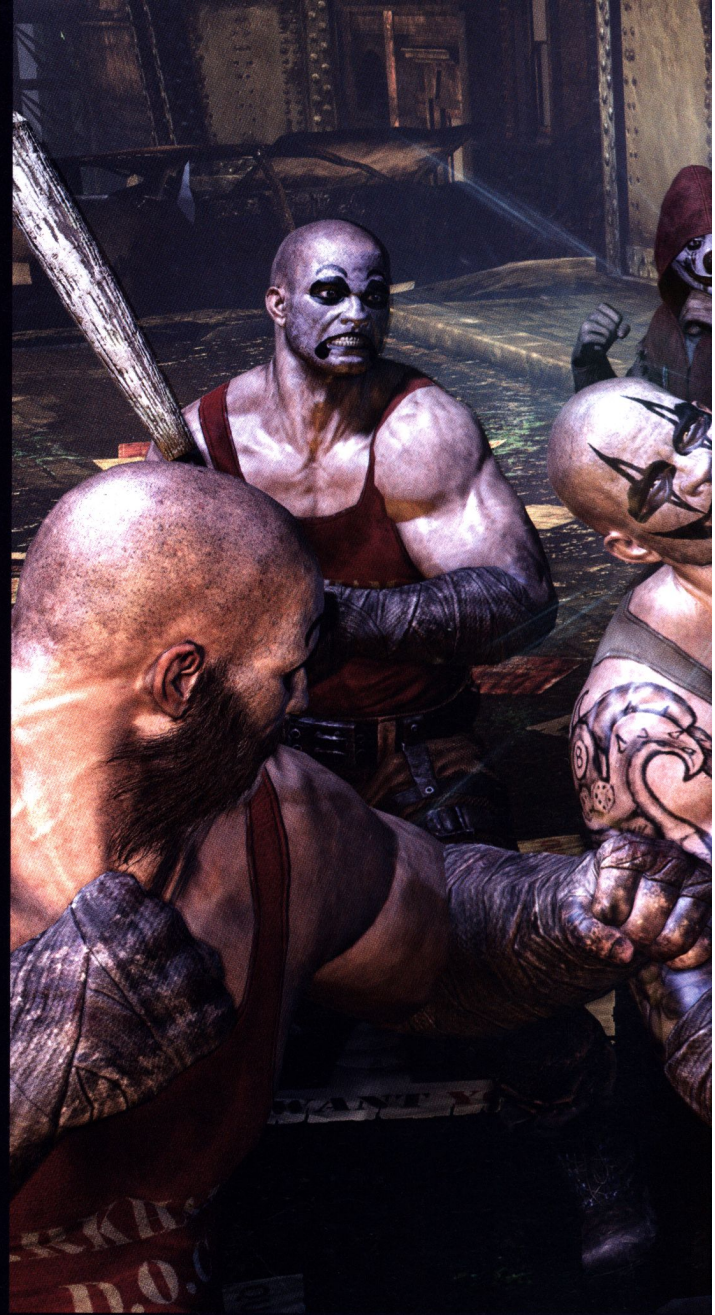
...and he can fly away from explosions.

"If you rush, you'll miss a lot of stories"









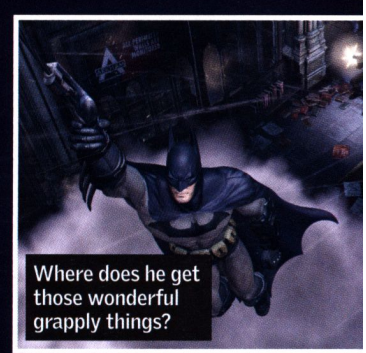
every corner with intrigue.

A phone rings nearby. We've all played *GTA* and we all know telephones mean missions. But this phone is surrounded by gang members. They're talking about a legend that's grown in *Arkham City*, if you answer a payphone, you die.

We answer the phone, and a vaguely familiar voice leers at us. It's Victor Zsasz, the gore-fantasist serial killer whose appearance in *Arkham Asylum* was a cameo. This time, he's got his own story and chain of missions.

GOOD VOICES

The dialogue with Zsasz – and in general – is more knowing and skillfully written than most other games. Compared to the endless taunts of the NPCs in *Splinter Cell: Conviction*, *Arkham City* is a masterpiece of background dialogue. Scripted by Batman veteran Paul Dini and Rocksteady's Paul Crocker, a scene with some of Harley Quinn's thugs tests the player's tolerance for meta-jokes.



"What are you nervous for?" one asks. "It's not like Batman's famous for escaping situations like this."

This raises a knowing smile, as a visual prompt to ready your smoke pellets flashes up. We wait, and they continue talking.

"What do you think he's going to do? Use a smoke bomb to cover his escape, then punch us all in the face?"



Brawls are bigger, with more car doors and fire extinguishers.

HAPPINESS IS IMPORTANT

The success of *Arkham Asylum* has made Rocksteady bigger and stronger. Their employee count has jumped from 37 to 70, and suddenly there's a reason for that trophy cabinet. Their high-ceilinged, open plan office is dominated at one end by a bewildering wall of tiny Post-it notes, stretching nine feet high. It's a work of exquisite anal madness. At the other end, a barefoot man with his leg locked on a nerve is piecing together a disturbing visual nonsense of meat – most reminiscent of a 2D version of Chris Cunningham's *Rubber Johnny* video.

There's no internet access. This is a happy office. We know it is, because they rate themselves 8/10 in terms of happiness, on a fortnightly basis.

"Happiness is important", explains Jamie Walker, without a smile. But this isn't the kind of happiness that comes from a YouTube clip of a startled puppy. There's no YouTube in Rocksteady, remember. This is happiness as proportionate to productivity. Happiness as self-worth, not as resenting that bastard across the room who's on Facebook yet again while you're up to your tits in it.

"I was chatting to one guy at his desk, and this light kept shining in his face. I said, doesn't that bother you? And he told me that he hated it. People don't bring these things up at work, though. They do it in the pub."

So, Rocksteady is dedicated to getting its staff to bring this stuff up in a more productive way. Hence, fortnightly happiness surveys.

"We've only had eight people leave the company since we started, that's pretty impressive," states Walker.

"Of course, we've had to get rid of some," he adds, with a laugh. It's one of those chilling laughs.



Save it for Talia, saucepot.

"This really is a city with a lot going on"

It's half-joke, half-hint, and funny. But wait and they continue talking.

"I've changed my mind. Shoot him."

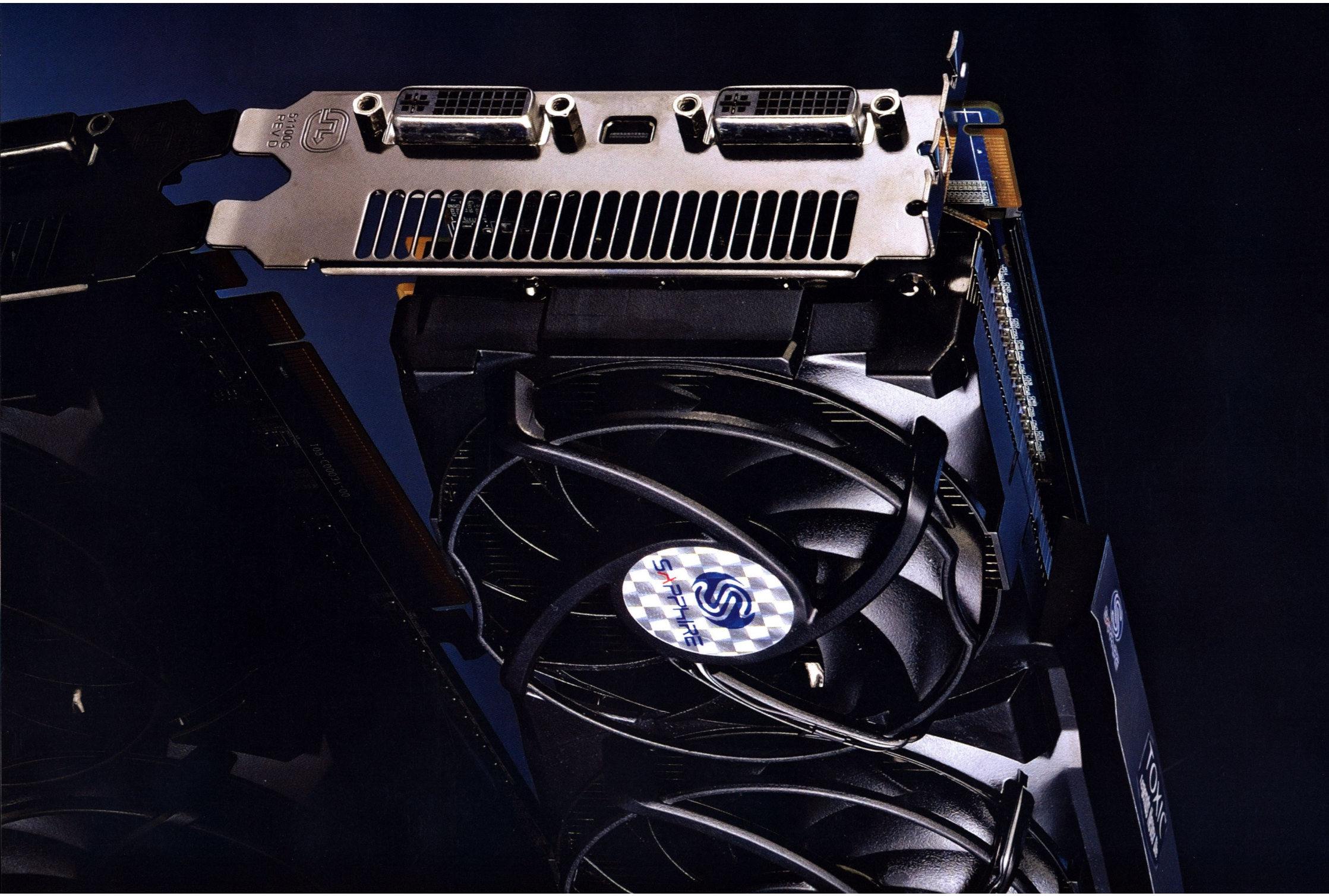
After a brief argument about whether they should, and whether they're going to shoot on three, or after three, we drop our smoke bomb and grapple into the rafters. And we're into the new Predator mode.

This is the one thing that's most similar to the first game, but Bats has a few more ways of taking people out with explosive gels, neck grips and the like. The most interesting thing is the way these moments are tied naturally into the action, instead of there being a room full of gargoyles effectively whooping, "Predator Room!"

You can also use your Predator skills in the city, using your gadgets to create portable walkways, from which you can drop down and despatch the thugs any way you see fit.

Just be sure to use Detective mode first by checking thugs against your crime database, you might find that one of them holds information you need on one of the gangs. This really is a city with a lot going on.

Taking *Arkham Asylum* into the open world is a step as logical and exciting as it is audacious. Will the claustrophobia of the first game survive the *Just Cause* chaos and travel? Will the excellent scripts of the first game expand adequately to fill a sandbox world? On past performance, and the excellent snips of gameplay we've seen so far, we can give Rocksteady the benefit of the doubt. PCZ


SAPPHIRE
TOXIC

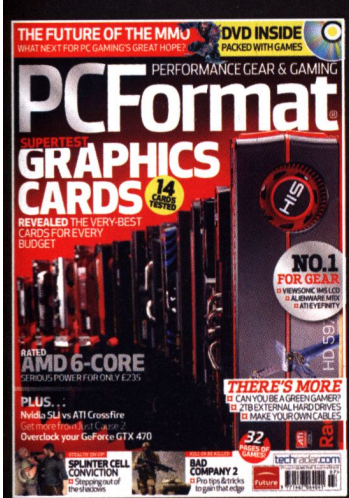
SERIOUS HARDWARE

PCFormat

PERFORMANCE GEAR & GAMING

PERFORMANCE ADVICE FOR SERIOUS GAMERS ON SALE EVERY MONTH

AVAILABLE FROM WH SMITH AND ALL GOOD NEWSAGENTS










PCZONE
PC ZONE
FEAR
DUNGEON KEEPER 2
PC ZONE BIOFORGE
Exclusive Review
YOUR CD IS MISSING
ASK YOUR NEWSAGENT FOR IT NOW!
PCZONE STALKER clear sky
THE UK'S FIRST GAMES ONLY PC MAGAZINE
PC ZONE
OVER 60 PAGES OF GAMES REVIEWS AND PREVIEWS
EXCLUSIVE
X-Wing
PCZONE GRAND THEFT AUTO III
So much better on the PC it's criminal
REAL-TIME STRATEGY
2002 FIFA WORLD CUP
PCZONE NAPOLEON
PCZONE PROJECT IGI
PCZONE FEAR 2
PCZONE DEUS EX 3
PCZONE JEDI KNIGHT
PCZONE STARCRAFT
PCZONE STAR WARS
PCZONE ENEMY TERRITORY
PCZONE SYSTEM SHOCK 2
PCZONE RED ALERT
PCZONE Elite II
PCZONE DRAGON AGE
PCZONE WARCRAFT
PCZONE SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR
PCZONE ULTIMA ASCENSION

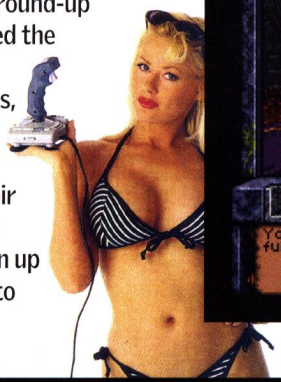
1993


SYNDICATE WARS
ORGASMIC!
CARMAGEDDON II
BLOOD II
SPLINTER CELL CONVICTION
RESIDENT EVIL
MARVELLOUS!
Sim City 2000
HOMEWORLD
CALL OF DUTY
THIEF 3
MASSIVE E3 ROUND-UP
MAFIA CLASH AGAIN!
Warrant Issued For Mob Head's Arrest
COPS CLOSE TO BUSTING CRIMINAL RING!
SEEDY CRIMINAL UNDERWORLD EXPOSED!
EX-MINISTER TOMMY ANGELO GUNNED DOWN IN SARDINIA

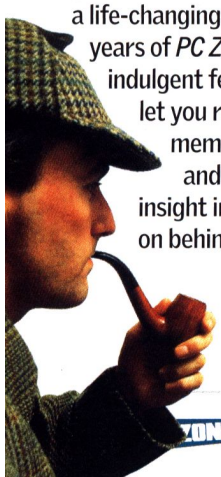
2010

Well if this is your first ever issue of *PC ZONE*, welcome!

This is what you could have won if you'd just thought to buy us back in 1993. A time when people enjoyed pornography without irony, and the CD-ROM was seen as the stepping-stone to an exciting future, in which pixellated men would have sex with wireframe women against a badly compressed background. It was a time when joystick round-up features formed the backbone of alternate issues, and people spent hours defragging their miniscule hard drives to loosen up enough space to play *Strike Commander*. Most of all, it was a time when talking about wanking, spooge and prolapses seemed edgy.

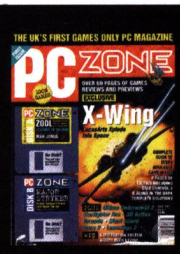


If you picked this magazine up because it had Batman on the front, then you're probably feeling confused and cheated, and wondering why you've paid £6 to watch a dead man masturbate. You'll have emotions ranging all the way from nostalgia to disgust, and we offer you a personal guarantee that you will suffer a life-changing prolapse. It's 17 years of *PC ZONE* in a self-indulgent feature that'll let you relive some memorable moments, and offer a bit of insight into what went on behind the scenes.





The granddaddy of an entire genre.



ISSUE 001

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

David McCandless reviewed *Ultima Underworld II* and gave it *ZONE*'s first-ever Classic award. "Anyone who knows the entire history of Britannia is to be found at the bottom of the evolutionary ladder, alongside train spotters and people who use the word 'quintessential'... nothing can fully prepare you for the freedom the game gives you. It's about as close to Virtual Reality as you are ever likely to get from your mouse driver."

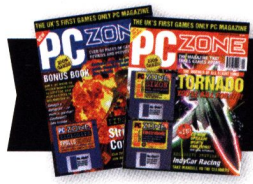


PAUL LAKIN

"During my year on *PC ZONE*, I went on Sky News. It was a disaster. I was called up by a researcher, because they wanted to run a story about the classification of videogames, and they asked if I was prepared to go on TV. I thought the piece would be prerecorded. It wasn't. To make things worse, when the newsreader read the introduction to the story, it was an almost verbatim summary of what I had said to the researcher. So I had nothing else to say. Then I made the fatal error of trying to start my reply with a joke, which I cocked up. From then on all I could do was stare blankly into the newsreader's eyes. They never asked me back."



THE LIFE & TIMELINE OF PC ZONE



1993

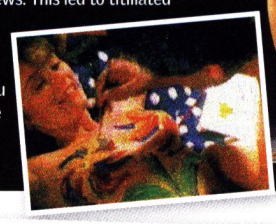




ISSUE 012

THE INTERACTIVE LOVER'S GUIDE

CD-ROMs are the bold new frontier – and they opened up a new world of datatainment. So, for a while, the raw wonder of Microsoft *Encarta* warranted reviews. This led to titillated nonsense like *The Interactive Lover's Guide* not only getting a full review (it scored 45), but featuring on the spine and the front cover. You lot like to pretend you're in it for the games, but you still go mental for the tits and willies, don't you?





OUR FIRST COMPETITION!

There was £1,200 worth of weapons-grade kit up for grabs in issue 1. You'd inhale sharply, imagining the 33MHz 386 processor throwing SVGA pixels onto a 14in CRT screen. You'd mime filling the meadows of the 85MB hard drive with 59 of the 3.5in HD floppies that came with *PC ZONE*! You'd wonder at the convenience of direct access to your system's disks with *MS-DOS 5.0*. Then you'd phone up the magazine and ask if the version of *Windows 3.1* that came pre-installed is the version that supports *Workgroups*! It was an exciting time to be alive. And we were there.

PC ZONE

System Shock **is by far the best 3D-RPG we've seen at *PC Zone* for a long time. Scoring 95 per cent last month, it's definitely one of "the games of the moment". This template will come in handy in conjunction with our TruePlayer™ guide on page 134.**

TAB/SHIFT-TAB: CHANGE WEAPON	PAGE
ENTER: FIRE WEAPON	CTRL-
BACKSPACE: CLEAR DISPLAY	CTRL-H: CHANGE HUD COLOURS
ALT-V: TOGGLE FULL SCREEN	ALT-H: ON-LINE HELP

Keyboard overlays, how we miss thee.

F1 SELECT LEFT MFD	F2 SELECT LEFT MFD	F3 SELECT LEFT MFD	F4 SELECT LEFT MFD	F5 SELECT LEFT MFD	F6 SELECT RIGHT MFD	F7 SELECT RIGHT MFD	F8 SELECT RIGHT MFD	F9 SELECT RIGHT MFD	F10 SELECT RIGHT MFD

ESCAPE OPTIONS

Q LEAN LEFT	W NEGATE LEANING	E LEAN RIGHT	R LOOK UP	T STANDUP

P PAUSE

SYSTEM SHOCK

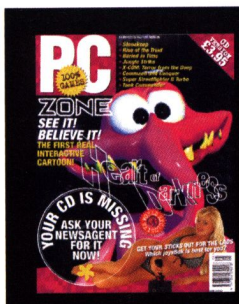
This keyboard template has been created by *PC Zone* for purchasers of the game *System Shock*, published by Electronic Arts. It is Not approved or endorsed in any way by Electronic Arts. All rights recognised.



ISSUE 024
BROOKER STARTS

Charlie Brooker couldn't make it. Dave excitedly shares their tweets.

Dave: Can you write for the mag?
Charlie: Will have a think.
Dave: I've created a Google doc if you'd like me to share you in?
Charlie: What's this Google doc?
Dave: It's a big collaborative thing.
Charlie: I am such a cunt. I don't have a Google account. It won't let me in.
Charlie: Ah, okay, I'm in it now.
Dave: As for deadline, 1 August?
Charlie: I go on holiday this Monday for a fortnight. Hmmm. I shall think.
Two weeks later...
Dave: Hi. Can I prod you?
Charlie: Gah, sorry, I'm just so behind schedule on everything else I haven't had a chance. Rubbish I know.
Dave: We're going to use your twitter chat history instead.
Charlie: That's okay with me. BUT WILL IT ENTERTAIN THE READERS? Ah, fuck em. It's the last edition. AND THEY ARE ALL CUNTS.



ISSUE 026
THE JOY OF STICKS

Six issues previously a feature reviewing joysticks began with, "They come in all shapes and sizes, and while size doesn't matter, performance does." Do you see where we were going with this? "Some give you the slip while you work up a sweat, others fall to pieces in your hand when you work them too hard."

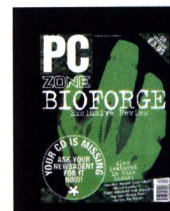
So far, so penis-esque. But then! "And they've all got more knobs than a Porsche full of hoo-rays called Quentin."

Way to lose focus with the penis analogy, boys. Either that, or your wee gentlemen are covered in knobs. In any event, the sexy joystick nonsense reached a beautiful peak in issue 26, when this gorgeous nun gave the Quickshot Python 5 a measly 45%.

Model Michelle Collins reappears with permission from the Samantha Bond Agency. (They're still going. At least there's that.)



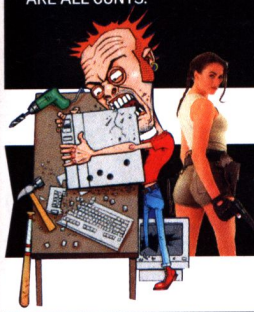
Salacious and immature? *PC ZONE*? Never.



ISSUE 025
LETTERS REPLY TO "NORMAL PEOPLE"

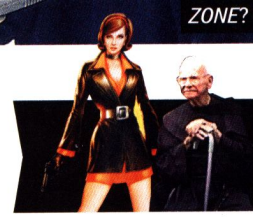
"It would be safe to say that nothing in the history of *PC ZONE* has something sparked off such a long line of correspondence as the time I used the word 'wanker' in The Editor's Ten Inches, five months ago. Basically, this is where all this lot started off... we said a couple of rude words in the mag and the mail hasn't stopped. Most people either didn't read the original offending article, or don't remember it. But whichever way you look at it, it got everyone going."

"Remember the time I used the word 'wanker' in the Editor's Ten Inches"

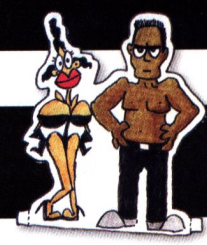


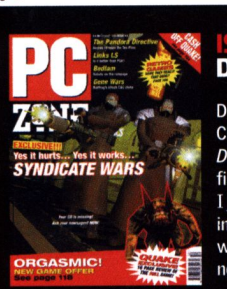
1994





1995

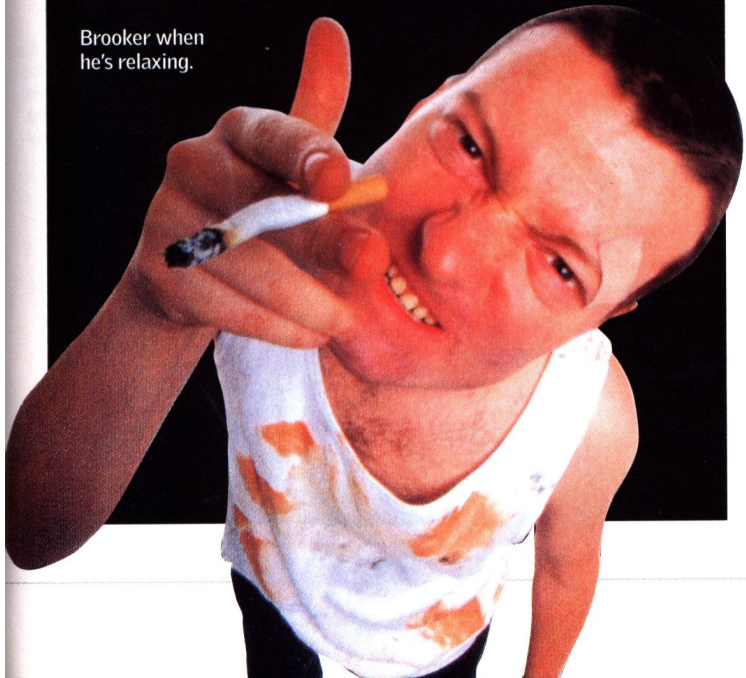




ISSUE 024
DAGGERFALL SCORES 65%

During his 2007 "Where Are They Now?" interview Charlie Brooker confessed that his controversially low *Daggerfall* score was due to his inability to get out of the first room. "I was on deadline, and panicking. In the end I just wrote about how much I hated goblins." We didn't include that in the magazine at that point, because we were keen appear professional. But Brooker's famous now, and we're dead, so who cares?

Brooker when he's relaxing.



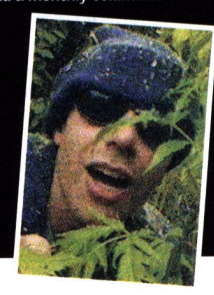


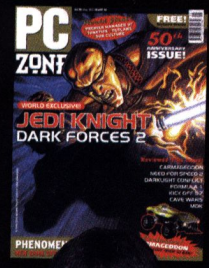
Plastic pointy ears not included.



ISSUE 039
CULKY SAYS...

Culky wasn't just the guy who assaulted EA's offices with a rocket-enhanced car, he had a monthly column in which he consistently failed to mention games altogether. "Alright? Culky here isn't it, from the centre of London." While Mr Cursor paid occasional lip service to PC gaming, Culky had no such qualms, his columns focused mainly on his rock-star grandmother, doodles of fish prototypes, and anything that crossed his hat-addled brain. You can see Culky in low-definition action, at bit.ly/culky_ea





ISSUE 050

STEVE HILL

Sliding into the scene with a one-page review of Wipeout 2097, Hill would become one of Zone's defining faces and dogged stalwarts. Aside from NeverQuest, he also dominated the Reality Check feature in which real-life experiences were compared to their gaming counterparts. Steve recalls the low points. Warning: contains strong language.

"Most shit Reality Check would have to be LARPing in a cave in Kent with some absolute fucking cunts. Playing as a minstrel, blowing on a well-chewed recorder enabled me to heal my fellow questers through the power of music.

"The highlight was probably some numpty from *PC Gamer* hitting someone repeatedly with a foam sword while verbalising the damage caused to his opponents hit points: '1, 1, 1, 1.' A swig of his blue Panda Pop and it magically became '2, 2, 2, 2.' The shame was complete when we surfaced for lunch at the same time as the local comprehensive school, 'Nice smock, mister.'

"Another shit one was when I snapped my collarbone like a twig on some SWAT training course, only for a PR twat to gleefully point out that I'd signed a waiver..."


BLOW MAN BLOW!


When gaming was sexy.



Ah Culky, life's not been the same without him.

"Most shit Reality Check would have to be LARPing in a cave in Kent"



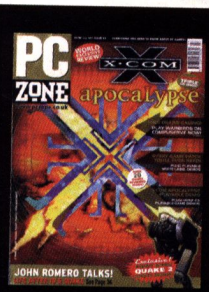
1996





1997





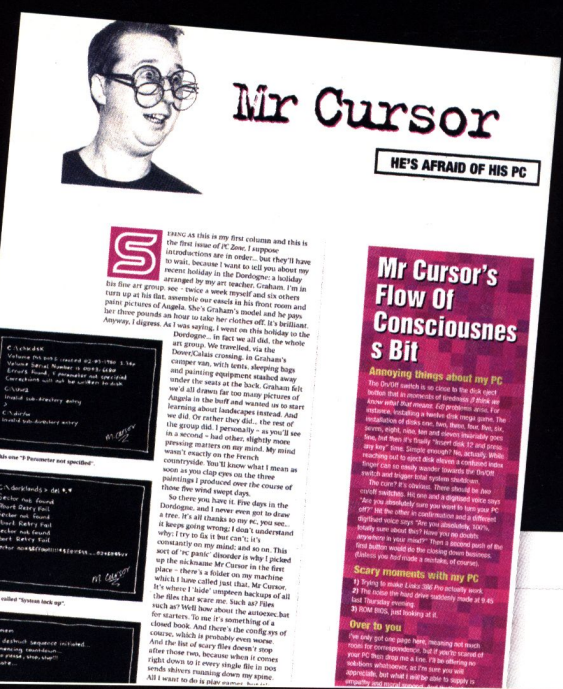
ISSUE 052

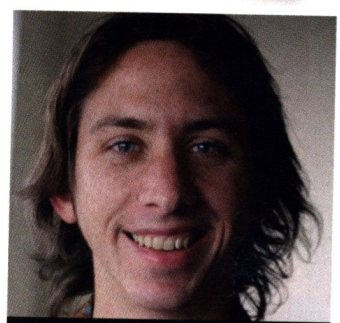
MR CURSOR

Mr Cursor is fondly remembered by many long-term readers. His casual references to drugs and his increasingly casual references to PC gaming meant that by issue 52, his back page column was 800 words about whether he should buy a bagless Dyson. Bass guitars, hallucinogens, Iron Maiden, Stephen Hawking and Alfred Hitchcock all got mentions, but the closest we get to PC games is a reference to a Nintendo 64. It's currently the fashion for gamers to have other interests in their life, so Mr Cursor was a breath of fresh irrelevant air. Despite giving way to Brooker's Bitter End and Sick Notes columns, Mr Cursor came back for issues 129 and 200.



Teletext: a very early internet.





CONOR MCNICHOLAS

"There's a move in *Quake* called the rocket-jump, an extra boost to get to higher levels. I can still do it now. A flick and click with the mouse hand matched exactly with a keyboard strike and I'm mentally flying to places that could make the difference between life and death.

"Yes, blowing your toes off could lose you health points but get it right and it was always worth it. The move is burned into my physical memory. It's immediate, instinctive and utterly fucking useless. But it's there because of the hours I spent playing *Quake* on *ZONE* and with the *ZONE* boys."



ISSUE 060 GETTING PULLED OFF

In its first 100 issues, *PC ZONE* was pulled off the shelves twice.

Once was for 'Lara Croft's Cruelty Zoo'. This was a joke that drew attention to the fact that Lara's propensity for shooting animals wouldn't be deemed acceptable outside of *Tomb Raider*. But it was changed to remove references to Lara at the last minute for fear of legal action from Eidos. Unfortunately, issue 60's Dr Helmut Werstler's Cruelty Zoo failed to get across the same element of satire, and just seemed cruel. The issue was taken from the shelves of WHSmiths and section editor Paul Mallinson got roundly bollocked.

The other removal of *PC ZONE* from the nation's stores was when a collection of 1,000 Doom WADs featured one which contained hardcore porn. People might not have noticed, but the fact it was called *XXXDoom* made it pretty prominent in the alphabetical listing.

the LARA CROFT CRUELTY ZOO



Hi everyone! Lara Croft here, to tell you all about my exciting new family zoo! As anyone who's followed my adventures will already know, I really hate animals. I can't stand the things. Let's face facts: they're lazy, they smell, and they're really really stupid. That's why I shoot them at every available opportunity. Bang, bang, bang I go. Bang bang bang. It's the only language they understand. The rotten little fur-encrusted bastards.

Now, thanks to my new zoo, you have a chance to join in with the cruelty, first-hand! Designed with the little ones in mind, my unique Cruelty Zoo is the ideal day out for anyone who's sick to death of the British public's mindless fawning attitude towards anything with four legs. But don't take my word for it... take a look at what's on offer and make up your own mind!

The Aviary

Let your kids run riot amongst the birdcages,with a selection of the finest handguns money can buy. Owls, parakeets, toucans... you name it, it's here... but not for long! All our birds are nailed to their perches for your murderous satisfaction. Happy hunting!



Li'l Bleeders

It's not just the exotic or endangered species that deserve a kicking. There's the little rural beasties to consider too. Anyone who loves fox hunting will love our badger fork-pogo contests!

If that doesn't tickle your fancy, why not simply poke a stoat in the eye with a pen? Our staff will





The original Cruelty Zoo that never saw print.



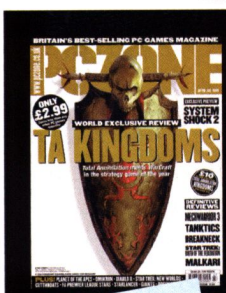
1998





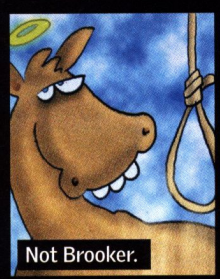
1999





ISSUE 078 SICK NOTES

When he was doing The Bitter End, Brooker's face featured the uncomfortable smile of a simpleton who hasn't found his calling. By the time it had transformed into Sick Notes, he was pulling the face he pulls to this day, an angry, lip-swapped gurn.



Not Brooker.

Although Sick Notes was primarily a vehicle to unload Brooker's scorn on the then-expendable readership it wasn't all bile. In issue 78, for example, Brooker pondered the legal case in which a man buggering a donkey was put to death, but the donkey was spared after several village people volunteered as character witnesses. See? Who said games weren't educational?

EASTENDERS ORGY LATEST

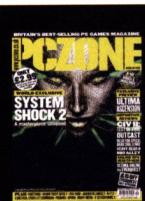
We asked you to choose the *EastEnders* character you'd least like to sleep with...

Frank Butcher. His false teeth would be expelled violently from his gums. His groans of ecstasy would resemble the sound of a blind elephant seal barking at the wind. His head, at best purple and distended with high blood pressure, would explode, splattering its contents far and wide. No one could offer me enough money to contemplate such horror.

Helen Larkin, email

Tell you who'd be by *far* the worst *EastEnder* to sleep with: Tiffany. Because she's dead.

'Monkey Spank'



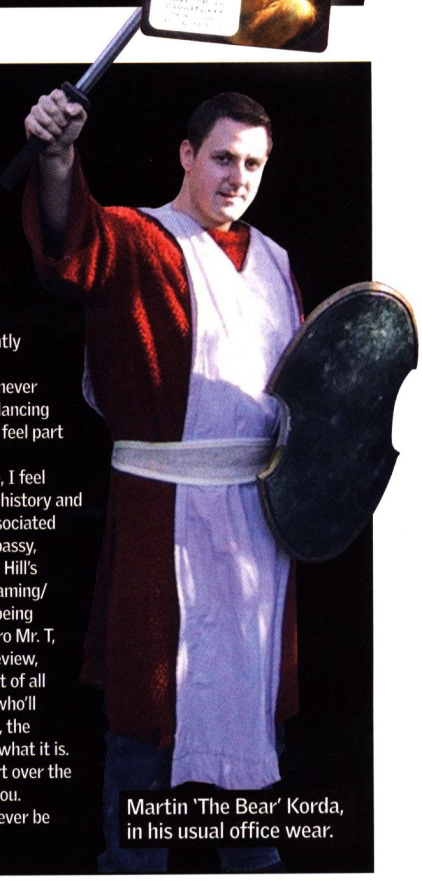
ISSUE 080 MARTIN KORDA

Man-bear Korda turned up as an optimistic work experience boy in the Summer of '99, and has been consistently present since issue 80.

"The thing about *ZONE* is that you never truly leave. Even though I've been freelancing for the mag for the last six years I still feel part of its DNA.

"When I look back to my first issue, I feel privileged to have been part of *ZONE*'s history and many of my happiest memories are associated with the mag. Picketing the Greek embassy, slaying a seven-foot minotaur to Steve Hill's recorder accompaniment, late-night gaming/drinking sessions in the Dennis cellar, being called 'a powerful man' by boyhood hero Mr. T, writing the world's first *Half-Life 2* preview, The Playingfields, Neel Kamal, but most of all the amazing people I've worked with who'll be dear to me till the day I die and you, the readers, who have helped make *ZONE* what it is. Thank you for all your words of support over the years, it's been an honour writing for you.

"Rest in peace, *PC ZONE*. There'll never be one like you again."



Martin 'The Bear' Korda, in his usual office wear.



PCZONE PCZONE2000 SPECIAL MILLENNIUM EDITION

ISSUE 086
PC ZONE GAME OF THE MILLENNIUM

The Game of the Millennium Supertest saw 12 *ZONE* stalwarts discuss gaming to that day: *Half-Life* was "the kick up the backside that the genre needed". *Final Fantasy VII* "wasn't a PC game". *Hidden & Dangerous* was "bugged". *System Shock 2* was a "work of genius". As of 2000, the best PC game ever was... *Half-Life*, with *System Shock 2* and *Hidden & Dangerous* taking the less yellowy medals.



2000

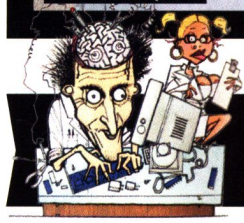
2001



"The console companies are too quick to declare the PC's doom. I feel very comfortable with where the PC is today."

It's official: PC gaming has officially been dying for a decade. If it actually does die in the next few months, you'll know it was us keeping it alive.

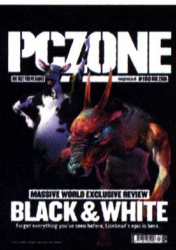






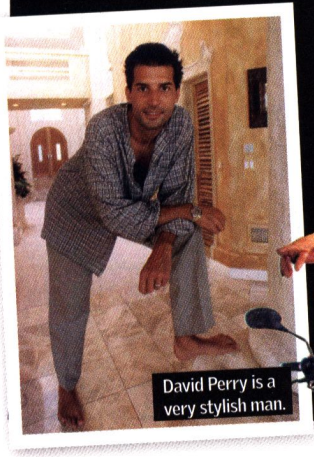
PCZONE

ISSUE 100
INDUSTRY PRAISE



As well as featuring a retrospective from which Paul Lakin's opening quote was directly lifted, issue 100 started the birthday tradition of industry names stopping doing their important jobs for a moment, and giving us a quote we could use to boast about how great we are. It's a tradition that we revived in 200, and to a ludicrously masturbatory degree in this, our final issue. Had you noticed it was our last issue, by the way?

Steve Jackson said "live long and prosper." *Sensible Soccer*'s Jon Hare said we are "the last bastion of the good old-fashioned, very British, balls-out games magazines". Meanwhile, at Shiny Entertainment, David Perry effused: "I'm not happy with PC *ZONE*. You gave *Sacrifice* 62." Yeah, it's all about you lot, and your games, isn't it?







ISSUE 102
KEITH PULLIN

"My strangest memory of *PC ZONE* is of being stranded in San Francisco for a week after the 9/11 attacks. Arriving at our hotel on the evening of 10 September 2001, I headed to the bar with Activision PR manager, Guy Cunis, and some other marketing types where we had a few nightcaps. At about 6am the next morning my slumber was interrupted by a phone call from Guy who told me to, 'Get down to the lobby, now!'

"Bleary-eyed and desperately confused I headed down in the lift and when the doors opened it was turmoil. People were running everywhere trying to get a phone signal or connected or something. It was pure panic. We moved into the bar where it was only slightly less chaotic and sat transfixed watching a TV in the corner of the room. We decided it would be inappropriate to proceed with the day's plan, which was to get over to LucasArts and play *Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds* for a world-exclusive review. After speaking with LucasArts we rearranged for the following day.

"We then had to find a flight home , tricky when all American airports were in lockdown. At one point I wasn't even sure if I'd make it back at all. The whole thing became stressful for one of the localisation managers, so she punched me in the stomach in the hotel lift. That remains the only time I've ever been punched by a girl. If it happens again, I hope it's in less trying circumstances."



ISSUE XXX

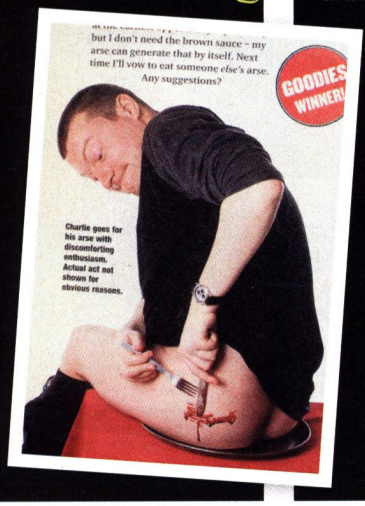
THE MAN WHO KNOWS





Following a *News of the World* report that online WWII shooter *Day of Defeat* should be banned, *ZONE*'s anonymous industry news columnist The Man Who Knows said, "They should stick to what they do best, tits and bingo," combining British language's two best words in one sentence.

The Man Who Knows was, of course, anyone in the magazine.







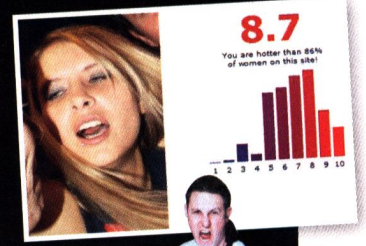
SUZY WALLACE

Prior to being a producer at Slightly Mad Studios, Suzy was *ZONE*'s reviews editor, winner of The Least Hideous Female Games Journalist of 2008 award, and possesses a turn of phrase that would make a docker wince and cover his ears.

"*PC ZONE* was my first 'proper' job out of uni. Sitting in an interview room with Dave Woods and Jamie Sefton, discussing the merits of having your creature in *Black & White* crapping on your village was a memorable way to kick off my career. It was a sign of things to come though, there were drunken nights out on wheat beer when editors used to stroke junior staff's hair, crazy press trips involving strip clubs in Athens, the world's most depressing canteen in Chernobyl, and the hunt to find the fattest man at E3, and of course the tradition of writing 'cunt' in massive letters in people's leaving cards.

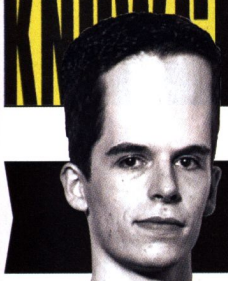
"Most memorable for me though was when Will Porter and myself secretly filmed Dave Woods and Jamie Sefton playing *Pro Evo 4*, the end result being the piss-poor video *How To Be A Good Sport (bit.ly/pcz_goodsport)*. I mean how many jobs will let you secretly film your boss going off on one, and then publish the video?"

"I mean how many jobs will let you secretly film your boss going off on one, and then publish the video?"









2002



2003

"Are you fucking with my head?"

ISSUE 119
BEFORE WANDY

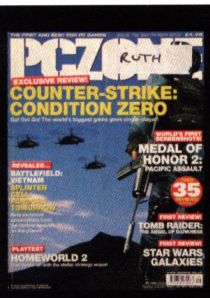
Steve Spence was Hardware Editor, in the pre-Wandy annals of history. Without his knowledge, his forehead was the object of a slow-burning running gag, slowly growing by a few pixels each month.

So, at what point does a molehill become a mountain? When Spence phoned up the office with the exquisitely ambiguous demand: "Are you fucking with my head?"

That's when.



Why *PC ZONE*'s team rarely left the office.



ISSUE 132

THE BEST OF BRITISH

ZONE has always been a British creature. Not in a vulgar flag-waving or political way, leave that to the Yanks and the Basque separatists. We're just keen to celebrate the best, and too lazy to travel far to find it. So, the third in the Best Of British series saw *ZONE* exploring the furthest reaches of South London, a daunting six or seven miles from the offices.



Zoners on safari.



ISSUE 156

VIRTUALLY JENNA

In 2005, it seemed possible that a human man would pay $30 a month to insert an ever-increasing variety of items into (a digital rendition of) porn star Jenna Jameson.

While Will Porter was giving *Virtually Jenna* a fairly generous 37%, a new sensation was born – the use of Steve Hill's face to obscure a lady's undesirables.

'Big' John Walker – one of *ZONE*'s longest-term crayon pushers, went even further – placing a pixellated version of Hill's slack, dead face on the in-game characters observing any even vaguely pornographic games.





2004



2005





RHIANNA PRATCHETT

"I will always have a soft spot for that basement where it all began. For my untidy desk in the darkest corner. For the days when my blood was 80% Chupa Chup and I could fit more gumballs in my mouth than anyone else on the team.

"For the times when I had to get Korda to answer my phone because of the masturbating caller on the other end. Perhaps he'd heard about the gumballs.

"And the fact that no matter how far I go in this industry I will still always be remembered for dressing up as Garrett for that stealth games Supertest."



ISSUE 159

RE-DESIGN

October 2005 saw the redesign that made *PC ZONE* the magazine it's been until its end, right now.

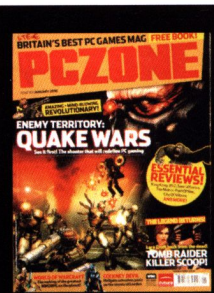
Emblazoned with a lenticular banner – like the rulers from the '80s that had animated dinosaurs – issue 159 saw the recruitment of Dominik Diamond, who proved to be a blend of Mr Cursor's technical incompetence and the thin-hair of Danny Wallace.

When celebrity back pages outgrew the mag's budget, he was replaced with the series of one-off spoofs that have seen us to our untimely death.

Not just techno-wise.

Techno-wise I am an arse!

DOMINIK DIAMOND JOINS PCZONE



ISSUE 026

HOGARTY'S SPACE ZOMBIES IN SPACE

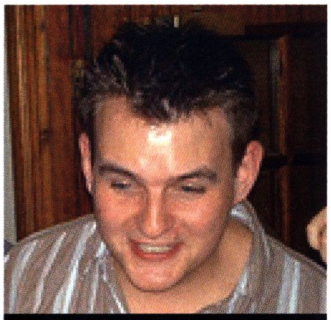
Steve Hogarty's adventures in *FPS Creator* coupled with a youthful willingness to spend a day fannying about with a fairly rubbish piece of game creation kit. We interviewed Steve about his creation.

"It starts off that you're in a space base. You're in a space base, and you realise the crew's been turned into zombies. There's a point where you see a zombie in a cage, but you can't interact with him. It's supposed to be unnerving. He's got a telephone, so he was clearly important when we was alive. Probably the captain. No-one else had a telephone, and if I was the captain I'd insist I got the telephone.

"There was a weapons room, too. In fact, it was the first room you walked into, and you got all the weapons you needed for the game there. There weren't that many, but it was a very short game. I couldn't make the zombies lurch slowly towards you, so what I did was slow down the running animation. It wasn't very convincing. But I made a game in a day, and dozens of people played it. Beat that, Activision."



Steve finished this game (unlike his other one.)



DAN MARSHALL

"My first *PC ZONE* was issue 5. It had *Syndicate* on the front, exclaiming it to be 'BETTER THAN SEX'. I was only little, and I remember I had to leave it lying cover-down in case my mum saw the rude 'sex' word on the cover. The mag just resonated with my sense of humour, coupled with the most trustworthy reviews I've ever found. Every detail was a joy to pour over until the game's release.

"Words can't express what it meant to me to write for you. I'd have done them for free, just for the giggly sense of glee it gave me to see my writing and mug in the almighty *PC ZONE*."



ISSUE 165

PAUL PRESLEY

Presley ran with the *ZONE* from the start until 165, three-quarters of the life of the magazine.

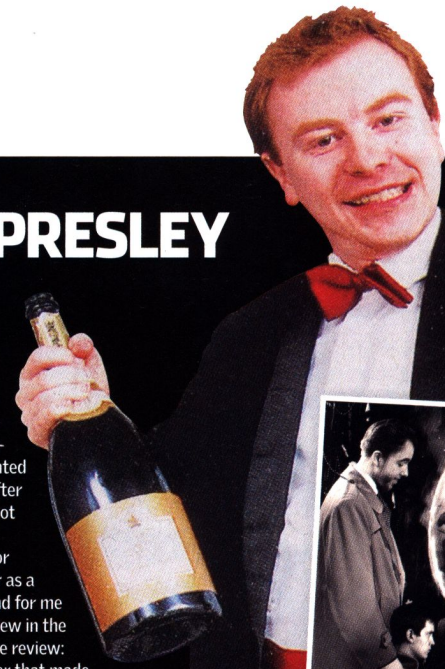
"We we're always a passionate lot in our coke-snorting, alcohol-drenched, weed smoke-filled basements. I once printed an unedited review of *Battleships* on the internet after the original was edited to sound more favourable. Got raked over the coals for that one.

"Advertising was pulled after I described a major games company in the throes of a massive takeover as a stepchild no-one wanted. The ingenious work-around for me promising *EverQuest II* a cover for an exclusive review in the same issue as a promised cover for a *FEAR*-exclusive review: *EverQuest II* got a reversed, upside-down back cover that made it look like a front. I didn't say which cover it could have!

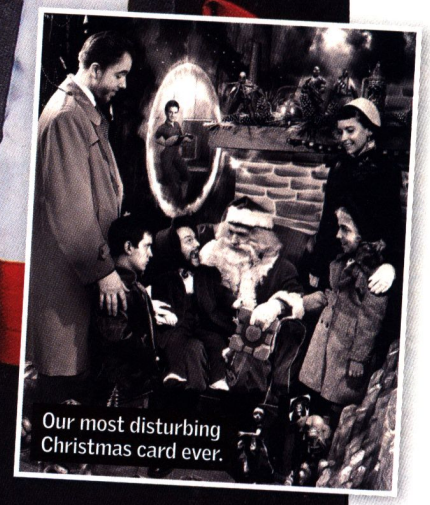
"We've always had a tight-knit group though, wherever we were. I remember when Future first bought us, and we moved into the evil overlord's lair, one of the existing publishers being amazed that we all seemed to 'like each other'.

"You could see the worn-down, soul-crushed faces of the other teams in the office in stark contrast to the joyful camaraderie we all shared.

"*PC ZONE* was never going to fit in to that corporate culture. And I'm proud to say that right to the end, we never did!"



Prezzer then is pretty much as he is now.



Our most disturbing Christmas card ever.



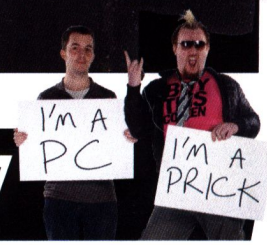


2006





2007





ISSUE 167

JON 'LOG' BLYTH

Fresh from an admin job in a local university, Log's recruitment to *PC ZONE* was a result of his blog. In particular, a train journey in which he had to carry a cup of his own piss around.

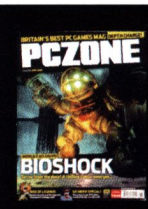
"I missed all of the good years at *ZONE*. By the time I arrived, the spirit of rebellion had been long snuffed out by the malodorous gusts of financial constraint. We would start every day with the company song, 'All Aboard The Future Choo-Choo'. And you'd have to make the train noises, or Jamie Sefton would jam his brutal Northern fingers into your windpipe.

"Everyone was always saying how much fun it used to be, but they'd cover their mouths as they said it, as though the dozens of hovering, heavily-armed CCTV cameras could read your lips.

"Well, not really. But I've always felt like I've missed out on a period of thrilling excess. I'd like to take this opportunity to ask everyone to take me out drinking and get me carried around Vegas by a WWE wrestler. It's the only thing that'll make the pain go away. Oh and if anyone wants to give me a PC, mine's gone to shit."



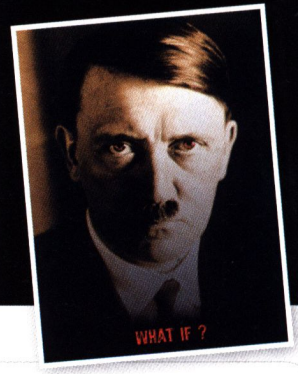
Log in his Edwardian mutton chops and garish PJs era.

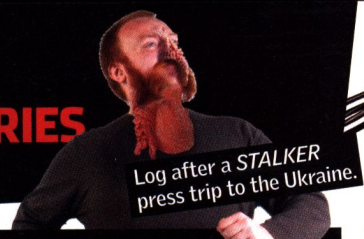


ISSUE 168

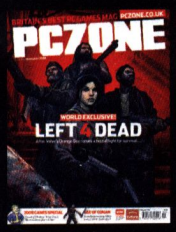
FULL PAGE PICTURE OF HITLER

If you're given the opportunity to print a full page with just Hitler's face on it, what can you do except agree, pocket the advertiser's cash and hope your offices don't get burned to a cinder by angry protesters?




Log after a *STALKER* press trip to the Ukraine.

NO ACCESS DRM



ISSUE 190
GOODBYE, JAMIE SEFTON

After trading his editorship for the title of 'Editor-At-Large', Sefton reluctantly left the magazine to promote Yorkshire's gaming industry in 2008.

"While *ZONE* was at Dennis Publications, I never once talked about budgets with Dave Woods. We'd usually freelance out the whole mag and piss off, which probably explains why the mag was eventually sold to Future.

"The most fantastic moment was beating *PC Gamer* to an exclusive *Half-Life 2* reveal. The amount of cloak-and-dagger stuff that went on, from moving our on-sale dates forward to beat *Gamer*, to mocking up covers in case someone at the printers told Future. When we heard that *PC Gamer*'s publisher went ape shit at the full Valve exclusive, well it was rather special.

"Then there were the office gaming tournaments . I once got told off by my publisher, Tara, for bellowing 'Fucking cunting cunt!' at the top of my voice while playing *Quake*. *Pro Evo* was another, the secretly-filmed evidence is on YouTube.

"When you've got a mag like *ZONE*, proofreading it was genuinely always a delight every month, for me, the quality writing was the most important aspect of the mag. I would bore my production editor, Clare, every month saying, 'Isn't it amazing that we started with nothing four weeks ago, and now we have this full, amazing mag!'"



Sefton had strange ideas about porn



2008





ISSUE 202
DAVID BROWN

Like a harbinger of doom and plague, David's joining the team coincided with everyone else buggering off.

Eventually, he managed to get a popular games blog to say "I never really cared about anything he wrote in the magazine." This is when a writer knows he's arrived, when people say how rubbish he is.

"If you'd told me five years ago that I'd be the man tasked with taking *ZONE* into the furnace one last time, I'd have spat in your eye and called you various bad names. Even now, weeks after these words will have been written, it'll seem strange that the magazine has gone.

"As I started reading from issue 1, it's something that's been there, an amusing constant, throughout my life. When October rolls around and issue 226 doesn't materialise, it'll be a sad day."



ISSUE 210
WORK EXPERIENCE

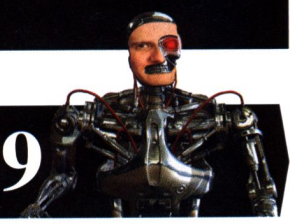
If you're hemorrhaging staff, and having your budget whittled to zero, you might as well trade on your ebbing kudos and exploit the general public as if they were slaves.

So it was that the last years of *PC ZONE* ended with a succession of students and recently unemployed grown-up gamers, plucked from obscurity to write admirable words about not-so-admirable games.

Some even came back for more and eventually their persistence landed them with a few scant pennies for 'proper' articles. Some we never heard from again, perhaps scarred by the whole experience.

One thing they all had in common though: not one of them ever bothered to fill in the health and safety forms that they were sent.



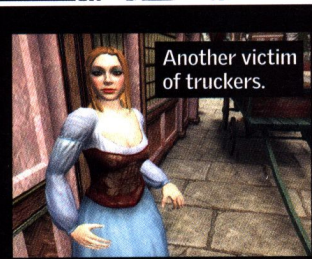


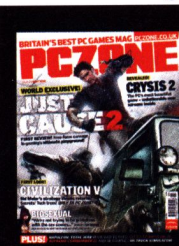
2009



ISSUE 200
EURO TRUCK SIMULATOR

Brooker returned in Issue 200 to review *Euro Truck Simulator*. His references to the private lives of lonely truckers and how they chose to fill in their spare time proved controversial, especially when an error was made with a screenshot, accidentally replacing a generic picture of a vehicle with one of the gaudily face-painted strumpets from a *Sherlock Holmes* game. In some ways, it was a fitting end to Brooker's time with the magazine.


Another victim of truckers.



ISSUE 219
STEVE'S RISE TO POWER

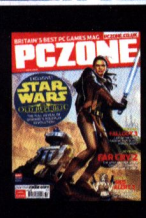
Ohhhh *PC ZONE*. I loved you, and you are dead now. Off to magazine heaven, where you'll be understocked in a spectral Morrisons, staffed by a dwindling number of underpaid angels, and published by some sort of incompetent, backwards-thinking and ironically named cloud.

I worked on this fucker (as they're called in the biz) from the age of 18, and had read it for years before then, so it's safe to say that *ZONE* took up a chunk of my life. (21.7% of it, according to calc.exe.)

So it's lucky that they've been such fantastic years. Any mention on these pages of *ZONE* not being a great place to work post-Brooker/Future/Mr.Cursor/what-have-you is utter rubbish. I couldn't have imagined working with finer people, with writers who have genuinely had a profound effect on my life and my career. I also got a few nice anecdotes out of the whole thing: falling out of taxis, missing flights to America, beating *Peggle*.

Three anecdotes. So, that's three anecdotes in five years. Which I think you'll agree is good going. Bye-bye *ZONE*. Thanks for letting me be your staff writer, then section editor, then deputy editor and then editor, all by virtue of my superiors quitting in rapid succession. It's been a hoot.


How Steve spends his life since leaving *ZONE*.



ISSUE 201
WILL PORTER

I've waxed lyrical about the spirit and wonderment of *PC ZONE* online enough in the past few months, so my *ZONE* memory is going to be selfish. It's the fact that back as a 15 year-old, if I'd never picked up that fateful copy of *ZONE* (*BioForge* issue), a remarkable chain of events wouldn't have occurred. Foremost in the summer of 2004 I wouldn't have found myself in a limo, at 4am, sat outside a Prague strip joint/brothel, handling a loaded Beretta pistol given to me by a local gangster hired as my minder. So thanks *PC ZONE*, for giving me such insane experiences.


The greatest photo ever in *PC ZONE*.

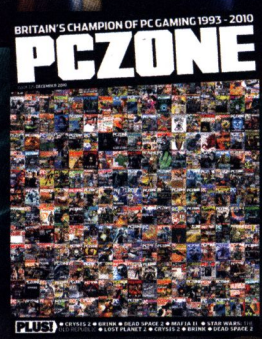


"It seems fitting that having guided PC gamers through a golden age, *PC ZONE* can exit with pride"

2010 THE END



How Steve spent his working time on *ZONE*.



ISSUE 225

RICHIE SHOEMAKER

"I won't recall the larks that were had, reel off the great and less great games I reviewed, or mention the hacking, cancerous coughs of the people that worked in the health and safety black hole of the *PC ZONE* dungeon. All were memorable to one degree or another. Instead, allow me to focus on the era of gaming that *PC ZONE* alone has witnessed.

"Think back to the first issues, when IBM-compatible PC gaming was less-than assured. It seems now that we find ourselves in the midst of another period of upheaval and transformation. As it was in 1993 when *PC ZONE* hit the shops, PC gaming is changing again, and it seems fitting that having guided PC gamers through a golden age, *PC ZONE* can exit with pride, having witnessed so many great games, fostered so much talent, and hosted endless laughs, tricks and japes.

"Inevitably *PC ZONE* must follow in the footsteps of its once-great predecessor *Your Sinclair*, by pulling its tired bones into the saddle of destiny and riding into the proverbial sunset, hopefully to yield to something new and magnificent. Our work here is done."

CREATIVE

CREATIVE GAMING HEADSETS

Total Audio Immersion for the Winning Edge

Sound BLASTER

Sound Blaster powered gaming systems

team-dignitas

"The Sound Blaster Arena Surround Headset from Creative is by far the best headset that we have used in a very long time."



SOUND BLASTER WORLD OF WARCRAFT WIRELESS HEADSET

THX TruStudio PC



SOUND BLASTER WORLD OF WARCRAFT USB HEADSET

THX TruStudio PC



SOUND BLASTER ARENA SURROUND USB GAMING HEADSET

FATAL1TY

Endorsed by Fatal1ty – the world's leading gamer

Johnathan "Fatal1ty" Wendel

"The Fatal1ty brand only goes on the very best products which have been battle tested by pro gamers around the world."



FATAL1TY PROFESSIONAL SERIES GAMING HEADSET MK II



FATAL1TY USB GAMING HEADSET (HS-1000)



FATAL1TY GAMING HEADSET (HS-800)

© 2010 Creative Technology Ltd. All rights reserved. Actual contents and color may differ slightly from those pictured.

www.soundblaster.com

Participating retailers:

OVERCLOCKERS UK · SCAN computers · ebuyer.com technology delivered · currys · PC World

PCZONE Reviews

Our verdict on the latest PC games

PCZONE swears

✔ To only review code signed off by the publishers and the developers.

✔ To give you our honest opinion. We're gamers. We love games. And we hate bad ones. Just like you.

✔ To tell you if a company refuses to send a game to us before it's on sale. There's always a reason.

✔ To hang up on companies who say that 79% isn't a good score. What do they know?

✔ To listen to you if you think we've got something wrong. Email us at letters@pczone.co.uk

PCZONE Badges

CLASSIC (90%+)
Games scoring in this bracket are air-punching, heart-soaring triumphs. Buy them.

RECOMMENDED (75-89%)
Head-turning, if not eye-popping, games. But then, who wants their eyes popped?

DUMP (0-19%)
PC ZONE's dirty protest. If a game is bad, we won't shirk our duty.

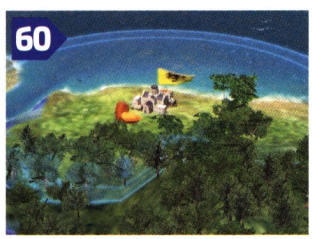
ON THE DVD
Good news! Check out the cover DVD for a playable demo or movie.

ONLINE ONLY
Don't have an internet connection? Then don't waste your time with this game: it won't work without one.

EXPANSION PACK
See this and you're going to have to get the original game first. We know, but life's not fair.



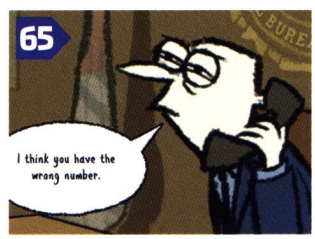
54 STARCRAFT II
Just how good is this sequel to the Blizzard's defining sci-fi RTS?



60 COMMANDER: CONQUEST OF THE AMERICAS
Mix up a bit of *Civilization* with a touch of *Total War*, and then excise any depth.

62 KANE & LYNCH 2: DOG DAYS
Two balding psychopaths run around Shanghai followed by a chap with a camcorder. Sounds like it could be fun.

64 ARMADA 2526
Remember all the great space strategy games we've seen? This ain't one of them.



65 NATHAN TETHERS: PUZZLE AGENT
Or, as it should be called, *Professor Layton – FBI!*

66 BLACKLIGHT: TANGO DOWN
A giant step backwards for the military FPS genre.

67 18 WHEELS OF STEEL: EXTREME TRUCKER

68 PRO CYCLING MANAGER 2010

69 RAILWORKS



69 TOWING SIMULATOR

70 PC ZONE'S BEST AND WORST GAMES EVER

74 THE LAST SUPERTEST

82 BUDGET

84 BUYER'S GUIDE

86 A LETTER TO THE INDUSTRY

The PCZONE Machine

As you'll see on the many pages of resplendent reviews that follow, we list the minimum specifications you need to play each game in each review. Please refer to the publisher's website to check out their recommended optimum specs that'll make the games super-whizzy. We review all new games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable InterPro IPW-Ci7 (pictured right). For more info on InterPro, head down to the internet and type the following into your browser: ipworkstations.com.





CLASSIC • CLASSIC PCZONE CLASSIC • CLASSIC

ONLINE ONLY

STARCRAFT II: WINGS OF LIBERTY

In *PC ZONE*'s last gleaming, *Richie Shoemaker* sees the light

DEVELOPER Blizzard
PUBLISHER Blizzard Activision
WEBSITE starcraft2.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £44.99

AT A GLANCE...

Sequel to the biggest-selling PC strategy game of all time, or just a remake of the biggest-selling PC strategy game of all time? Well, it appears to be both.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: 2.6GHz processor, 2GB RAM, and a GeForce 8600M GT or ATI X1600 or better graphics card. Permanent internet connection required.

HOW IT STACKS

STARCRAFT II: WINGS OF LIBERTY	95%
RED ALERT 3	86%
WARHAMMER 40K: DAWN OF WAR II	78%

EARLY ONE EVENING last week Mrs Shoemaker asked me to go to the garage to pick up some tissues (she had a cold, or at least pretended to), but before I headed out the door she asked if she could have a quick squiz of *StarCraft II* while I was out.

Fair enough, I thought, as I looked into her pleading, watery eyes. I'd been playing the game for a week, forgoing many of my chores and duties in order to concentrate on vanquishing aliens and their improbable fighting machines. Even though my campaign against the enemies of freedom and liberty was nearing its dramatic conclusion, my wife's dribbling nose was in obvious and immediate need of relief.

Before I'd even gotten my shoes on she'd started a new campaign and was skipping through the cinematics and all attempts by the game to tutor her.

"You should really watch those cutscenes," I said, fumbling for my keys and wallet, "They're good."

"Yeah, if you're a 12 year-old boy," she snorted through a ball of sloppy white tissue.

Astonished that my significant other was dismissive about the game's presentation, especially with her being a fan of *WarCraft III*, upon my return (having wolfed down a sneaky Drifter on the way) I realised that Mrs Shoe was enjoying the game much more than she might have wanted to. It wasn't until the wee small hours that I was finally allowed back onto the PC.

At that time, I discovered to my horror that her new campaign had overwritten my old one. Hours had been lost, planets would have to be retaken and research restarted, but my dismay soon gave way to triumphant clarity. The realisation dawned that in not allowing the option to save more than one campaign, or at least a warning that starting anew will wipe the previous effort away, *StarCraft II*'s developers had revealed something of themselves. Like many, I'd assumed them to be perfection-seeking automatons, but could it be that the crafters of *'Craft* were human beings?

I awoke the next day invigorated, keen to uncover more evidence that *StarCraft II* wasn't the masterpiece so many were claiming and that in the 12 years since its predecessor was unleashed, becoming the most successful real-time strategy game in history, its aloof and distant creators hadn't so much transcended as bluffed their virtuosity.

STARTING AGAIN

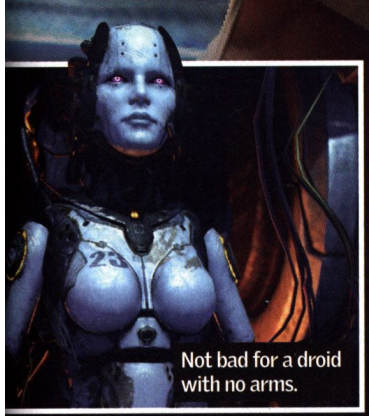
Ensuring Mrs Shoemaker's adventures were safely stowed, I began afresh. Where before I had been enraptured by the bravado and vigour of the story and its focus on the hard-drinking Jim Raynor's efforts against the tyrannical Terran Dominion, I'd now questioned the searingly obvious fact that the storyline didn't expand on the events of the first game, so much as retell them.

SHINY ENTERTAINMENT

StarCraft no longer looks or feels like it has raided the archives of *White Dwarf* for ideas. If *StarCraft II* can be accused of being influenced by anything beyond the obvious refrains of *Starship Troopers* et al, the abundance of dusty locations, Texan accents and the distinct flourishes of slide guitar, makes the criminally short-lived science-fiction Western series *Firefly* the most obvious inspiration. Mrs Shoemaker loves *Firefly*, by the way. I think that's why she was so keen to have a go at the game.


It's the only way to be sure.


Battlecruisers on patrol.


Not bad for a droid with no arms.


Saved by the air cavalry.


"Run to your deaths little power-suited fellows, run!"

Raynor is still fighting wars civil and personal and is still smitten with the memory of Sarah Kerrigan who, we're reminded, was left to the mercy of the Zerg and carried off to be transformed into their dastardly Queen; while the Protoss are still getting in the way of things, of course, with their nonsensical prophetic riddles. The only new questions *SC2*'s storyline pose are why are the Zerg are returning, how will the evil Dominion be brought down, and who really cares what the Protoss are up to anyway?

Despite my new-found haughtiness for the story's details, it's impossible not to enjoy all of its branches as they tangle and spread across the near 30 missions of this campaign. Dazzling cutscenes whizz the story onwards, but it's the dozens of in-engine sequences that establish the characters and keep them in view that really holds attention.

Starting the first set of missions, it's easy to overlook the limited build options. Of course, the arsenal widens as you progress and, thankfully, the single-player campaign offers units and augmentations that aren't available in the multiplayer or skirmish games. Examples include increased armour, extended weapons ranges, and the ability for a unit to shoot at ground and air units simultaneously.

There are also buildings and units exclusive to the campaign: the Medic, Firebat, and later the Odin – a gleefully overpowered walker unit. Run a couple of SCVs behind one to repair damage and the Odin is practically invulnerable. But that doesn't take anything away from the smile it puts on your face as you waste dozens of enemy units with each pounding step.

TWIST OF FLAME

The focus of each mission is just as noteworthy as the units and their upgrades. Each will typically prompt you to hinge your tactics around whatever new unit you've been issued.

The mission objectives are immediately familiar regardless of the units you have available – ranging from capturing various points of the map, keeping the enemy at bay and escorting or rescuing friendly units – but there's often a twist that tempts you away from relying on familiar tactics. For example, in one mission a wall of flame is spreading across the map, forcing a series of staggered advances, but also inviting an audacious aerial troop drop far beyond enemy lines.

The important thing to note is just how distinct the campaign experience is, not so much in the fundamentals of build-group-annihilate, but in the effort that's so obviously been expended to ensure the single-player game isn't just a primer for *SC2*'s online experience.

In one mission you'll be holed up and building up your forces, in another you must carefully manage resources to keep impossible odds at bay. As someone who will always turtle up if given half the chance, I found being constantly forced out of my RTS comfort zone more exhilarating than I ever expected.



Jim Raynor, saviour of humankind. Maybe.

In spite of the wealth of detail and all the effort than has been poured into this game, the fundamentals of build and conquer are no different from the original, or when real-time strategy gaming was born. In spite of the capable engine and fast, vibrant visuals, *StarCraft II* is as 2D as they come. There are none of the undulating landscapes we've come to expect in 21st Century RTS games, and no rocky outcrops you can use for cover.

Every map is set across good old-fashioned flat tiles. Of course there's higher ground that you have to make use of, but effectively you have an upper and lower tier for ground units and a third for aircraft. As well thought out as they are, these are maps that could have been planned out using an Etch A Sketch.

EVOLUTION BABY

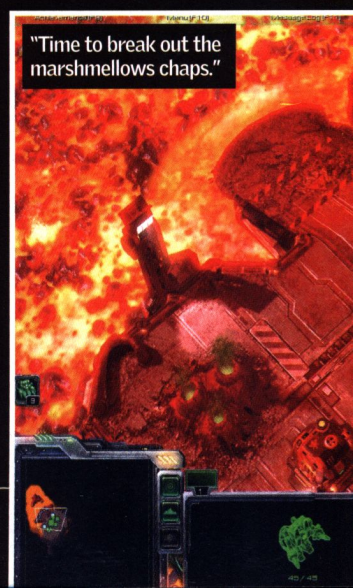
There really isn't much of a revolution going on. *StarCraft*'s innovation was the weight and balances between the three very different sides, which was competently nailed down last century.



A Zerg infestation. You don't want it in your pants.



Bravery in the face of certain death.



"Time to break out the marshmellows chaps."

BRIDGE COMMANDER

Rather than precede each mission with a standard briefing, Blizzard have crafted an elaborate set on which to stage the drama between the main protagonists, the good ship Hyperion. Acting as a between-mission hub where you can chew fat with members of the crew, watch news, allocate research points and spend credits, it's a haven from what might otherwise have been a relentless sprawl of frantic mouse-clicking.

Some people have compared the Hyperion experience to a point-and-click adventure, which is perhaps overstating how these sections play a pinch, but it's certainly an effective way to frame a story and anchor the missions.



OK, so the cutscenes aren't Telltale.

"I have to admit that *StarCraft II* is the most exhilarating RTS game I've ever played"

However, there is some measure of evolution and if you're a *StarCraft* veteran it's probably more evident than for those of us who were either too young or arrogant to appreciate it.

For all the simplicity of the maps, and the fact that, in the campaign, the game is very much about partitioning your forces and dominating choke points, in multiplayer the strategies are much more subtle and interesting. Terran Reapers with their jetpacks are able to wreak merry havoc behind the lines. Sneaky, too, are the squirming Zerg units that can burrow beneath the ground and pop up when and where you least expect them. Nasty.



If you're a *StarCraft* virgin, taking the game for its first multiplayer spin is a daunting prospect, especially given that many units and abilities from the campaign are absent from multiplayer or Versus modes.

Thankfully Blizzard have made it simple to ease yourself in with a series of challenges that show a few strategies, as well as a matching system that gives you plenty of games for you to assert what level you should be playing at before it properly seeds you. It's hard to think of a multiplayer mode that is more initially welcoming. In spite of my own catastrophic losses, I never felt like I was being thrown in at the deep end. Thanks to the easily archived replays, build lists and stats, rather than blame the unit balance or some game mechanic when I was trounced, as I usually do, I could easily see that I was being beaten by lack of experience half the time, and by being just plain rubbish at all others.

AH, REDEMPTION

Despite of concerted efforts to uncover evidence to the contrary, campaign data loss aside, *StarCraft II* is an exceptionally crafted game. From the accessibility and weight of the units in the multiplayer experience, to the immense attention to detail in all aspects of the lengthy campaign, playing the sequel to the biggest RTS of all time is an absolute blast. It's up there with *Half-Life 2* in terms of how important the game is with regard to displaying the effort and detail that's been lavished upon it, and how masterfully it repays the faith fans have invested in waiting for it.

As someone who failed to appreciate the charms of the original, I have to admit that *StarCraft II* is, without doubt, the most exhilarating RTS game I've ever played. Unashamedly old-school and delightfully solid, what it lacks in bold ingenuity it more than makes up for in theatrics and poise.

Expensive as it is, even without the excellent multiplayer game *StarCraft II* would be a recommended purchase. With it, the game is essential. If Blizzard can throw a dash of reckless invention into the next episode – the Zerg-focused *Heart of the Swarm* – another *PC ZONE* Classic award will be assured.

Except of course we won't be here to hand it out. In 12 years we doubt many magazines will. Tissue anyone? PCZ

PCZONE

GRAPHICS Smooth and vibrant
SOUND Guitars and gravel voices
MULTIPLAYER Does not disappoint

- ✔ Sublime multiplayer
- ✔ Lengthy campaign
- ✔ Finely balanced
- ✔ Hint of *Firefly*
- ✘ Done it before

95

Will be popular

SMARTER COOKIES ENABLED



JOIN US ONLINE AT
WWW.PCGAMER.COM

The site looks absolutely awesome. Great move on your part! Keep the editorials and articles coming in the magazine. It seems like you guys have stepped it up the past couple of months. **NzYme**

Thank you thank you thank you for the years of PC love and joy PC Gamer has brought to me. **NADS**

To quote a certain space marine: "Hell, it's about time." Loving the site, guys. **shadeheart**

Glad to see a big PC-only games site again. **drivebyhobo**

Yep, seriously about time, and looking very good. Worth the wait... **Gurdenator**

Yay! Finally, a real PC gaming site that I can frequent. Let's get the community rolling! **Str7k3r**

I love the new site and the multiple daily updates. This has become my main site for all things PC gaming related. I make regular visits here many times a day. Keep up the good work! **Pandub**

Long time reader and it's great to finally have a site. **level1paladin**

THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE PC GAMES MAGAZINE

PC GAMER

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF PCGAMER.COM?

Been a subscriber for a LOOOOOOOONG time. I caught a blurb in the current PCG about a redo and came to check it out. Way to go, gang! You will probably be seeing my ugly mug here for a while. Thanks again! **SkullCowboy**

This site is awesome. Keep up the good work guys. It is already on my daily stop for game news. I LOVE PCGAMER! **xFlashx**

Well done Chaps. **Manuel Calavera**

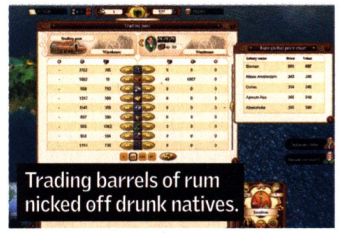
New subscriber here, after buying your mag on a trip to London (previously only hearing about the "best PC gaming magazine in the world" on other sites) and what can I say? Some articles seemed like you guys were reading my thoughts, put them to paper and expanded upon them, and I love the sense of humour and apparent honesty. **Dexter**

Thanks guys for doing this, it makes a hardcore PC gamer like me feel I'm still thought of as important, instead of insignificant; I look forward to participating in the forums! **pOrtalthinker**

THANK YOU. WE'LL SEE YOU ONLINE SOON!


"Set sail for that visual metaphor for this magazine."


There's plenty of ship customisation to play with.


Trading barrels of rum nicked off drunk natives.


A fledgling Puritan colony, yesterday.

COMMANDER: CONQUEST OF THE AMERICAS

"Send them Norton and we'll take O'Brien," harrumphed *Paul Presley*

DEVELOPER Nitro Games
PUBLISHER Paradox Interactive
WEBSITE cota-game.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £24.99

A LITTLE-KNOWN FACT of gaming is that at any given time, there are at least five *Civilization* clones doing the rounds, masquerading under historical realism trappings, wooing those in Germany and Scandinavia who lap up this genre almost as much as they enjoy sub-par techno trance music.

Commander: Conquest of the Americas is one such game, setting itself in the 16th century and asking you to lead a European heavyweight to glorious trading victory by opening ports throughout the New World of North and South America and exploiting the natives for everything they're worth.

Essentially it's a dual exercise in fleet management and colony building. The former being how you ship goods about to find the best price, usually at your off-screen home port, but occasionally at other factions' ports should they need certain goods to help a production chain. The latter being how you decide to staff said colonies and what buildings you place to maximise revenue (cotton can be turned into fine clothing with a weaver, clothier and local branch of Gap in place, for instance).


With the interface turned on it's a lot less pretty.

SHORTTERMIST

Add to that, a regular tax levy on colonists, a need to house soldiers to fend off native raids or attacks by European factions that dislike you, and a pseudo role-playing affair with XP-gaining ship captains and crew for those rare but inevitable sea battles and you're just about done.

Most of the challenge comes, as always with these games, from the micromanaging of an ever-increasing set of units and colonies with plenty of scope for tech advancement in terms of ship types. Pity, then, that the actual ship battles, while often grand in scope, lack a sense of fine tactical control, mostly down to a badly thought through user interface and a lack of real options.

Presentation is par for the course for these things – functional rather than welcoming – and while there's plenty to keep you occupied, there's nothing in the way it looks or the way it plays that we haven't seen before, realised far better.

Commander is a competent entry into the vast canon of resource managing, semi-tactical strategy games, nothing more. It does the job, entertains while it does so, but lacks any passion to sustain in the long-term. PCZ

AT A GLANCE...

A mix of *Civilization, Age of Empires* and *Pirates of the Burning Sea*. Except not as good as any of them.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: 2GHz Core Duo processor, 2GB RAM, and a 256MB graphics card with Pixel Shader 3.0 support.

HOW IT STACKS

EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR	94%
CIVILIZATION IV	92%
COMMANDER	63%

PCZONE

GRAPHICS Bland at best
SOUND Standard fare
MULTIPLAYER None at launch

- Pretty comprehensive
- Moves at a fair old lick
- Plenty of replay value
- Nothing Earth-shattering
- Presentation is bland
- Sea battles lacking

63
Civ Lite

FILEPLAY.NET

EUROPE'S FASTEST GROWING VIDEO GAMES DOWNLOAD SERVICE



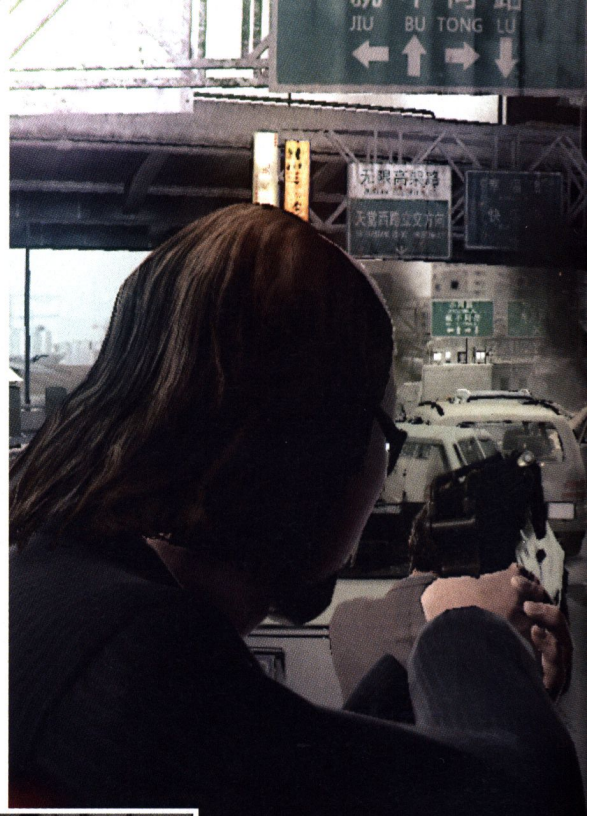
MULTIPLAY

WWW.FILEPLAY.NET

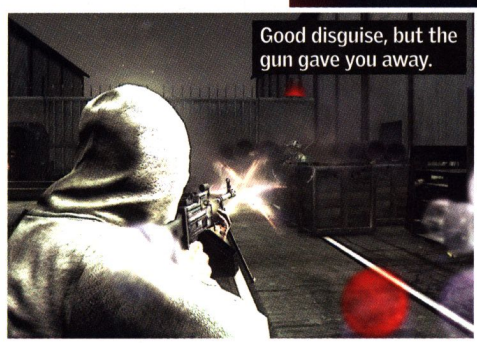
Your free download service for PC game patches, demos, mods and media content

©2008 Fileplay, part of the Multiplay Group. All rights reserved


Kane and Lynch: a modern bromance.



KANE & LYNCH 2: DOG DAYS


Good disguise, but the gun gave you away.

Mike Channell was unavailable for comment

DEVELOPER IO Interactive
PUBLISHER Square Enix
WEBSITE kaneandlynch.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £35

RECOMMENDED PCZONE RECOMMENDED

AT A GLANCE...

Gritty third-person shooter sequel sees Kane and Lynch raise the ire of Shanghai's armed residents.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: 3GHz Pentium 4 processor, 1GB RAM (2GB for *Vista/7*), and a 512MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

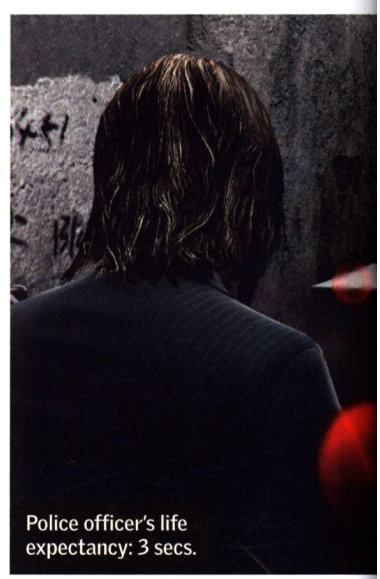
KANE & LYNCH 2	80%
MAFIA II	80%
KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN	79%

DISILLUSIONIST: Not sure why I should give a flying fuck about this game. The first one was a passable crim-sim, but by no means the last word in third-person shooting. Few stand-out moments and then it literally lost the plot and buggered off to Cambodia or something in the final third. Besides, I play games to escape from being a balding old fart who spends his time wandering around in his pants – why would I want to play one?

CHOCOLATEPAIN: The visual style really does make a huge difference to the experience. It's what turns this from an average shooter into something that's consistently surprising. It's not just the YouTube-style effects, which as a gimmick never really outstays its welcome, but also the choice of Shanghai as a location and the density of detail in the environments. If you sit and stare at the game for a while, it's not the prettiest in the world, but the combination of all the effects and the visual density means it feels like a real place. In the end, in spite of everything that's layered on top of the graphics, they're all designed to make it look like footage so it usually feels understated rather than obtrusive.

GETTODACHOPPA: The shaky cam stuff is brill. It's like *Crank: The Game*. Only without that mockney Neanderthal idiot Statham.

KIDNARCOLEPTIC: I reckon that *Crank*'s a pretty good pop-culture comparison, and it shares a similar breakneck pace with *K&L2*. It's hardly surprising that the game starts with a chase, because the gritty guerilla style, particularly the shaky cam sprinting, gives everything a sense of urgency. Having said that, the pace doesn't really vary at all, it's always a slow start followed by a massive shitstorm of bullets. It can get tiring.

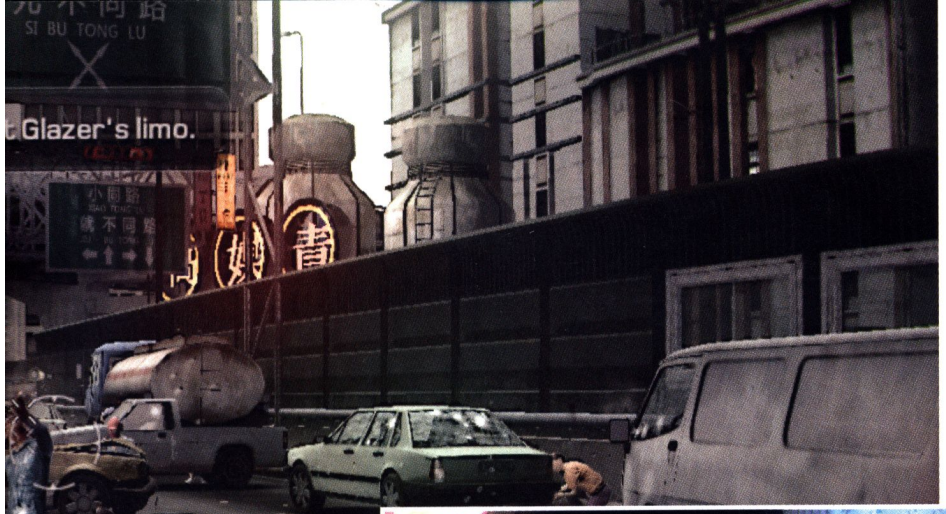

Police officer's life expectancy: 3 secs.

KINETOSIS: It makes me feel sick. Why do I want to play a game where the cameraman is staggering around like a hammered tramp?

TROLL2: That's why there's an option switch it off, idiot.

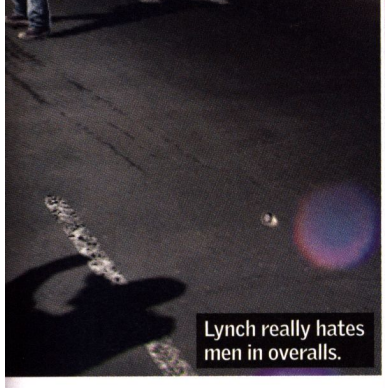
[Comment removed by author]



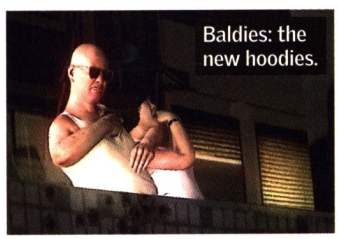



"Damn. Got viscera on my shoe again."


As ever, seeing violence is OK. Seeing pubes is not.


Lynch really hates men in overalls.




Baldies: the new hoodies.

XXXGAMEPLAYXXX: The biggest problem with *K&L2* is that in spite of all these fancy effects, the action is still just a shooting gallery. You hide behind cover and then you wait for the enemies to pop their heads up so you can click on them. Occasionally they'll flank you, but most of the time you're both pinned behind cover and pogoing up and down. It's like being in a gunfight from a bad spaghetti western.

PARANOIDMANDROID: They do mix it up every so often. The section where you're trying to protect a limo as it crawls through a freeway full of wrecked vehicles adds a bit of flavour. There's that helicopter mounted gun bit too, but it goes on too long and with all the bullets and rockets flying around it's more confusing than quantum physics. By and large though you eventually share Lynch's frustrations that the entire city of Shanghai seems to be attempting to kill you.

BEWBTACULAR: OMG nudity! [3 people like this comment]

"It might look like style over substance, in *Kane & Lynch 2* the style is the substance"

SAWXIII: Yes! That section's actually pretty horrific. All the really nasty stuff is pixellated out, but again it's almost more shocking because the game has that understated, visual style. It really does look like shocking footage found on a cameraphone in the tiled basement of a psychopath.

PC_TIL_I_DIE: I can't believe no-one's mentioned the co-op yet. It was split screen only last time, and even then only worked if you had an Xbox pad *shakes fist at *GFWL** but this time it's got proper online co-op. The multiplayer modes are brilliant this time around as well. Fragile Alliance is back, but there's a new one where one player is an undercover cop who has to avoid being detected but can't shoot any police. It's unique and definitely worth a look.

THEPROF: Ultimately, while it might look like style over substance, in *Kane & Lynch 2* the style is the substance, and it's enough to keep you interested during shooting that might otherwise have become dull a lot sooner. Things could have been improved by not just falling back on levels full of crates at certain points and shaking up the behaviour of the enemies you face, but the story barrels along and the art direction is consistently impressive. It's not often you find a game that's more than the sum of its parts but *Kane & Lynch 2* falls into that category.

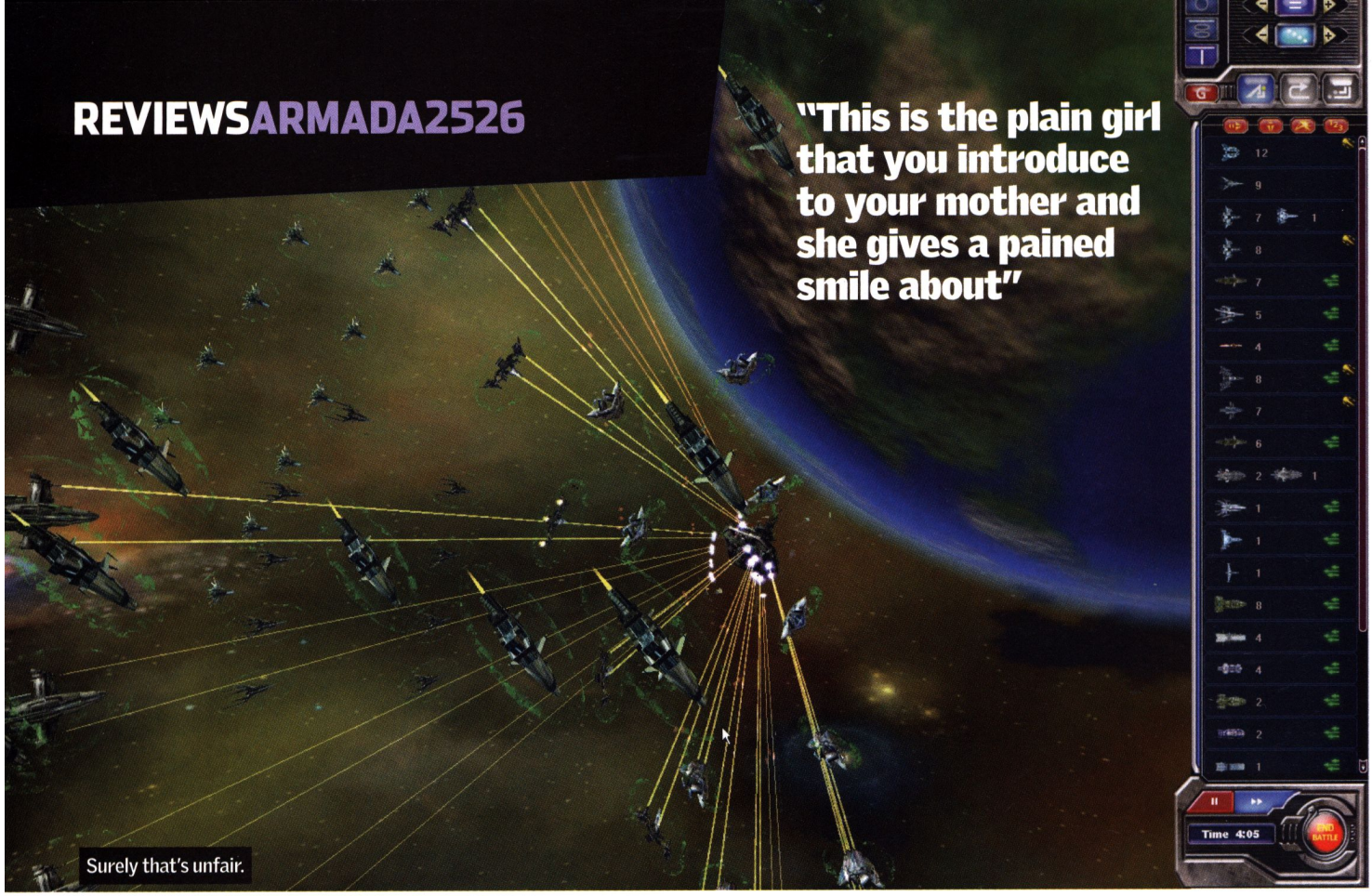
SANDIMASHIGHSCHOOLFOOTBALL RULES: Lol... shut up nerd. PCZ

PCZONE

GRAPHICS Artistically great
SOUND Decent acting and atmospheric score
MULTIPLAYER Campaign co-op plus competitive modes

- ✓ **Unique visual style**
- ✓ Interesting setting
- ✓ **Engaging story**
- ✓ Shooting gets repetitive
- ✗ **Pace can be too relentless**
- ✗ Occasional logical lapse

80
Style triumphant



Surely that's unfair.

ARMADA 2526

"*GalCiv* is hard!" says *Dan Griliopoulos*. "Armada," says *2526*

DEVELOPER Ntronium Games
PUBLISHER Iceberg
WEBSITE ntronium.com/armada2526%20home.html
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

IF ONLY THEY'D shot *PC ZONE* into space with Richard Garriott instead of this slow death of 1,000 budget cuts. With a string of conquests by our space-editor-pirates bleeding from the galactic rim straight to the supermassive black hole at the Milky Way's centre, the sun would never have set on the Zoners' empire (because suns don't set in space.) Instead, here it is, the last space sim ever to grace these pages. *sob*

Armada 2526 is a galactic space simulation in the mold of *Galactic Civilizations* and *Masters of Orion* (the original *Armada 2525* was a precursor to *Masters of Orion*). You control an empire and must lead your people/treemen/brainjellyfish across the galaxy to fulfil certain racial conditions and claim universal domination. The game comes with four scenarios, a random galaxy generator, a map designer, a tutorial, a space battle simulator, and hot-seat multiplayer.

The main game structure is turn-based space exploration, where you explore, colonise planets, build facilities and research tech. There are 12 races to control and contest, each with their own goals, strengths and weaknesses, identical tech trees and units, and appallingly animated low-res avatars. The maps aren't huge, so you can get through a game in a few hours.

When you encounter hostile enemy forces you drop into real-time combat. These battles aren't huge or complex; they're pokey predictable things where the control system is so abstruse and the time limit so stingy that it's easier to auto resolve than beat up the pathetic enemy AI (no difficulty levels means you're stuck with it.) And if there are any of the super-cheap planet defences installed attackers might as well give up, the balance is completely off.

UNPRETTY

As a space 4X title, *2526* is almost acceptable. This is the plain girl that you introduce to your mother and she gives a pained smile about, because she knows your ex was much nicer/brainier/hotter. That ex is *GalCiv* and the reason you left her was commitment. *GalCiv* is gorgeous, intelligent, strong, varied, and a great storyteller, but isn't half a time-sink. This girl may blend in with the wallpaper a bit and have off-putting lonely hobbies like philately, but she doesn't need much attention.

This isn't a bad 4X game. *GalCiv II* is so complex it's best expressed most easily in space opera narratives – "And then my race of retarded chimp-gods sailed their banana-barges up the dread lords' bums" – but while *2526* is faster and pared down, it's less imaginative, easy to beat and badly balanced.

Our first issue reviewed the RTS-defining *Dune II*, and we've covered such delights as *Galactic Civilizations*, *Star Control 3* and *FreeSpace 2* over the years, so it's a pity we couldn't go out with a bang. *whimper* PCZ

AT A GLANCE...

4X space sim on a galactic scale with an arbitrary futuristic date but lacking balance and depth.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
2.4GHz Pentium 4, 1GB RAM (2GB *Vista/7*), and a 128MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

SINS OF SOLAR EMPIRE	91%
GALACTIC CIVILIZATION	72%
ARMADA 2526	59%

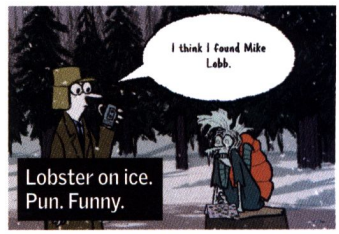
PCZONE

GRAPHICS Rough, simple, fugly
SOUND Annoying, repetitive
MULTIPLAYER Hot seat campaign multiplayer

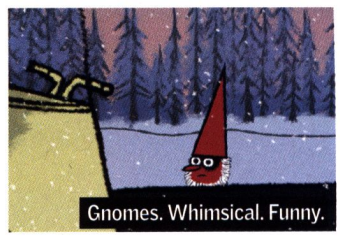
- ✓ Interesting race design
- ✓ Fast campaign games
- ✗ Unattractive
- ✗ Repetitive and repetitive
- ✗ Shallow compared to *GalCiv*
- ✗ AI dumber than a dumbbell

59
Extraneous

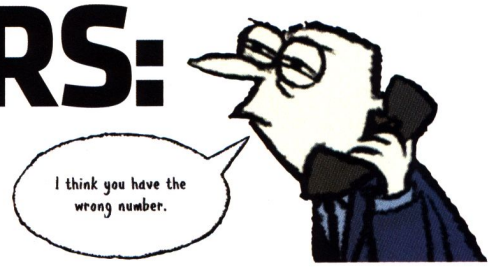








NELSON TETHERS: PUZZLE AGENT



Jon 'Log' Blyth works it out with a pencil

DEVELOPER Telltale Games
PUBLISHER Telltale Games
WEBSITE telltalegames.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £5

NELSON TETHERS IS a man from an '80s cartoon strip. He's not so much animated, as dynamically illustrated, with a typical movement involving two frames. As a puzzle agent, he occupies the FBI's least prestigious role, and you'll find him to be a charisma-free zone.

The game starts off irrationally enough, while he was having a dream about a spaceman Tether wrote the word 'Scoggie' on a scrap of paper. So, when he discovers that there's an eraser shortage in the FBI building, he hops onto his snowmobile and heads straight to the town whose name he wrote down in his dream. Yeah, the one he had before he found out about the eraser shortage.

You'll be glad to hear that the logic of the puzzles is more coherent. And for the price, you get a decent puzzle-to-pence ratio. Even more reassuringly we don't run through the usual gamut of classic puzzles. It's a relief not to have to be subjected to the Tower of Hanoi, yet again. Instead, you'll get a few clever jigsaws, codes and thoughtful logic puzzles that are generally pitched between easy and satisfyingly tricky. The marking system is cute, with every solution filed costing the taxpayer upwards of $75,000. Cuts clearly aren't hitting the puzzle-solving bureaucrats.

But, I'll come clean, I'm a DS *Professor Layton* fan, so I was hoping for a similarly paced adventure. But in a number of ways the game annoys. There are too many conversations, which wouldn't be a bad thing if you could speed them up to reading pace. But the text is too slow and the voice acting is slower. Unless you develop a boner for the game's dry wit, you'll be clicking your way through the talking, in the end skipping them completely.

BROKEN HUMOUR

The humour isn't just broken by poor timing and passionless delivery, it's not clear whether *Tethers* wants to be funny or not.

Take Mike Lobb. He's referred to as The Lobster. But when one character says, "He got bitten by the lobster", you think, "hang on, lobsters don't bite". And Mike didn't bite anyone, it was an argument. I refuse to believe I'm the only one who can be angered by poorly functioning jokes.

Buy *Nelson Tethers* for the puzzles. It's not much money, and you can skip the talking without worrying about the plot. You might find the chat endearing. After all, some people like having their balls nailed to wood. PCZ

AT A GLANCE...

An illogical story told by a lead who is totally charisma-free. But the puzzles are decent for the money.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 4 2GHz, 512MB RAM, and a 64MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

MONKEY ISLAND 2: SE	92%
SAM & MAX 3.3	90%
PUZZLE AGENT	68%

PCZONE

GRAPHICS Quirky semi-cartoon
SOUND Canadian accent frenzy
MULTIPLAYER What – do you need help?

- ✔ Puzzles are interesting
- ✔ Distinctive visual style
- ✔ Acted well enough
- ✘ Humour misses regularly
- ✘ A little less conversation

68
Not funny. But not bad


It may look like a glitch, but it's a pixel smoke bomb.


This game has 4,000 new shades of grey and brown.


The Order: gits who must die.


Great as the guns look, this is no *Modern Warfare 2*.

BLACKLIGHT: TANGO DOWN

Will Porter knows when he's been tango-ed. It's when he feels like he's been kicked in the balls

DEVELOPER Zombie Studios
PUBLISHER Ignition Entertainment
WEBSITE playtangodown.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £9.99

AT A GLANCE...

Crappy budget online shooter with accompanying threadbare missions destroyed by a lack of players and poor match-making.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
2GHz Core 2 Duo, 1GB RAM and a 256MB graphics card. Permanent internet connection and *Games for Windows – LIVE!* Required.

HOW IT STACKS

MODERN WARFARE 2	94%
BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2	84%
BLACKLIGHT: TANGO DOWN	46%

SO WHOSE FAULT is it that this budget online shooter is shit? The developers, or the last cancerous embers floating on the breeze from the smouldering pyre of *Games For Windows – LIVE*?

Well, the fact is that at the time of writing hardly any bugger is playing this on PCs. When you read this, in the absence of miracles, there will be little more than a couple of servers twiddling their thumbs and glancing nervously at each other, wondering who'll be first to die. Seeing as *Blacklight* sits behind PC gaming's most notoriously stodgy bloatware, it's relatively easy to connect the dots.

We're in a near-future Eastern European city, and the game's art style is, at least, rather interesting. It's like *Tron*, as imagined in the digital '90s, instead of flashbangs turning the screen white you're presented with a blue screen of death, and when you spawn into rounds of deathmatch, domination and the like you emerge with digital blurry flecks like a decloaking Predator.

As you pad around each map there's a handy HUD view you can use to see through walls and have useful items and opponent locations highlighted.

Meanwhile, there's a more-than-decent unlock system working in the background. And should you tire of the traditional *Call of Duty* multiplayer modes there are six short missions that can be played solo or in four-player co-op, A to B affairs that flood levels with gun-toting villains and what can only be described as the melee-homeless. *Left 4 Dead* it's not.

LONELY GAME

The primary issue with *Blacklight* is having to wait an age to get even a half-populated multiplayer bout going. Once I had to wait 20 minutes for a team deathmatch game. You tell the match-making system what you want, it disappears behind a curtain and it then stumbles around the internet for an age before belatedly reappearing with a handful of high-level dicks who go digital on your arse. If there were browsable dedicated servers (as is right and proper) all could be well. But that's not how it works these days is it?

In other news, the user interface is impenetrable and confusing, the map design dull and uninspired, and player movement sluggish in the extreme.

Whatever the price, in no sane world should *Blacklight* be played instead of *Modern Warfare* or *Counter-Strike*. Its only saving grace is that it shows, in the end-days of *PC ZONE*, that *GFWL* was dead and buried first. PCZ

PCZONE

GRAPHICS Dull. Dowdy
SOUND Airless and depressing
MULTIPLAYER Up to 16-man PvP and four-player co-op

- ✓ The art style isn't bad
- ✓ Decent unlock system
- ✗ Slow, uninteresting combat
- ✗ Servers are a ghost town
- ✗ *Games for Windows – LIVE!*
- ✗ No point in it existing

46
Shitlight: Tango Brown


"Black ice. Damnit."


Third person, but no cover system.


Just freewheelin'.


See? Do you see? That's extreme!

18 WHEELS OF STEEL: EXTREME TRUCKER

"It's the last issue, so can we write what we want here?" asks *Steve Hogarty*

DEVELOPER SCS
PUBLISHER ValuSoft
WEBSITE extremetrucker.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £12.99

EXTREMITY IS RELATIVE. For somebody who routinely leaps off bridges without a bungie cord doing something extreme would involve nipple clamps, speeding trains, imagination and jail time.

For somebody whose life consists of staring listlessly at a motorway from inside a moving box, occasionally remembering to stop at red lights, and go at green ones, an unexpected fart is extreme enough to turn every font within a 20-mile radius into that "flame" font you used to get on lunch boxes.

Extreme Trucker earns its title by virtue of its three, utterly off-the-wall locations. Ever dreamt of driving a truck in the snow? This one's got you covered. How about driving a truck with three trailers across the Australian outback? Hell yeah, now we're talking extreme trucking. And then, once you've become numb to the thrill of cold places, hot places and very long trucks, how about driving a truck along some winding mountain paths in South America? If *Extreme Trucking* can't reignite that burning passion you once had for driving virtual trucks, you're either dead, or it's for one of the following reasons.

A FLYING TRUCK

There was satisfaction to be found in the mundanity of law-abiding in *18 Wheels of Steel: American Long Haul*. Observing the rules of the road was crucial to what was otherwise a basic driving simulator. *Extreme Trucker* removes the police, the speed limits, the trucking tycoon elements, the traffic lights, the junctions, everything that made that grump of a game marginally interesting, and leaves you with an appalling engine and three stretches of winding road. The driving model is so poor, it's not even possible to enjoy this game ironically. That I can criticise this game beyond simply pointing and scoffing, "What kind of wanker wants to pretend to drive a truck?" shocks me to my core. If I've one thing to thank *PC ZONE* for, it's my intimate knowledge of over 40 niche simulation genres, every pissing *Sims* expansion and Stuff pack, and one unyielding tide of copy-and-paste Chinese free-to-play MMORPGs.

Come to think of it, thank god this rag's gone under. Good riddance. PCZ

"So poor, it's not even possible to enjoy this game ironically"

AT A GLANCE...

Trucking becomes marginally more extreme. Would've been more extreme had they done a level where you crash your truck into a titty bar.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
2.4GHz CPU, 1GB RAM (2GB *Vista/7*) and a 256MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS



PCZONE

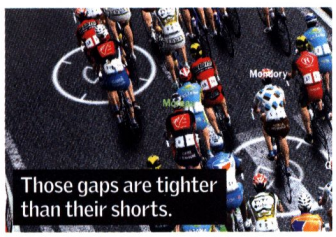
GRAPHICS Basic
SOUND Midi rock-tunes
MULTIPLAYER Nada

- ✓ Three locations
- ✓ You can fall through the ice
- ✗ Outback isn't extreme
- ✗ No rules, no fun
- ✗ No damage

39
Not nearly extreme enough


Relaxing on holiday.


Something the British are good at.


Those gaps are tighter than their shorts.


"We're all individuals."

PRO CYCLING MANAGER 2010

Keith Pullin goes for one last ride

DEVELOPER Cyanide
PUBLISHER Focus Home Interactive
WEBSITE cycling-manager.com/pcm
ETA Out now
PRICE £17.99

WHEN HE MAJESTICALLY swept over the finish line in the 2010 Tour de France Spain's Alberto Contado sang, "I've got a bike. You can ride it if you like. It's got a basket, a bell that rings, and things to make it look good. I'd give it to you if I could, but I borrowed it."

Playing *Pro Cycling Manager 2010* is as close as most of us will come to singing a ditty after completing the world's most gruelling bicycle race. Whilst it won't appeal to the masses, it does offer something to those who aren't fazed by 180 Lycra-clad arses.

When it comes to the extremely niche cycling management genre this is as good as it gets. There are times when *PCM2010* looks beautiful, the sight of riders turning into the Champs-Élysées or cascading down a mountain pass can be impressive. Of course, most of the game is spent hitting the accelerate time button to skip past the courses' endless straight roads and fields.

And yet there's a sense that this is a proper simulation rather than a screen full of cyclists and scenery. If you can fathom the occasionally baffling menu system and interface, it becomes clear that tactics, strategies and orders do make a difference.

NOT JUST ROADS

This isn't just about Le Tour though. The career mode lets you train up a team from scratch, and the season mode takes you through one whole season as one of the 65 official teams. You can choose from 500 separate stages to race, and even sample the classic mode where stages from historical races can be re-enacted.

There's also an indoor track mode where you can take a break from the gruelling long-distance slogs and indulge in a spot of high-speed pursuit as well as numerous other velodrome-based activities. To top it all there's an editor that lets you create your own extreme race routes involving cliffs and sheer drops.

If you're into bicycle racing then *PCM2010* is worth it. And best of all you get to play in baggy shorts, which means you don't scare your family and neighbours. PCZ

"Tactics, strategies and orders do make a difference"

AT A GLANCE...

For cycling enthusiasts who want to win Le Tour de France without getting a sore arse.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
1.7GHz processor, 1GB RAM (2GB *Vista/7*), and a 256MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

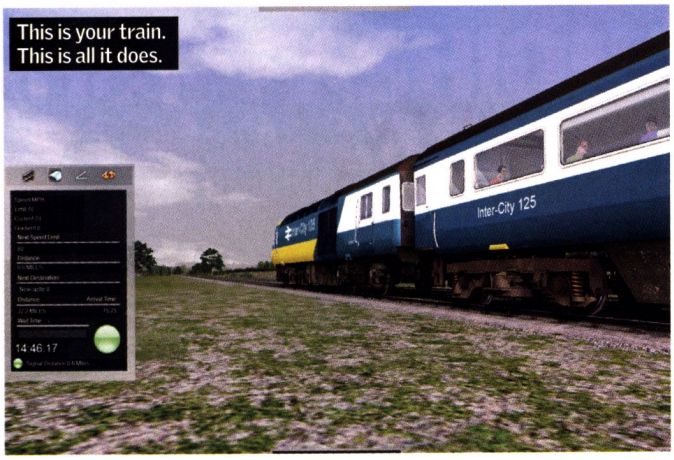
PRO CYCLING MANAGER 2010	71%
PRO CYCLING MANAGER 2008	50%
PRO CYCLING MANAGER 2007	40%

PCZONE

GRAPHICS Wheely good
SOUND Screeching brakes
MULTIPLAYER LANce Armstrong

- ✓ **Feels like a strategy game**
- ✓ Looks good at times
- ✓ **Varied mode selection**
- ✓ Edit your own courses
- ✗ **Messy menus and interface**
- ✗ Races take a long time

71
Takes the yellow jersey

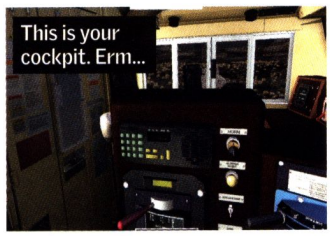


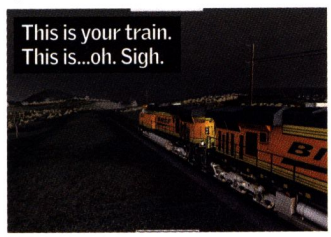
RAILWORKS

Riding the 6.66pm to Monotony

DEVELOPER Rail SimulatorDevelopments
PUBLISHER Steam
WEBSITE railsimulator.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
1.7GHz processor, 512MB RAM and an AGP PCIe 64MB graphics card.





DON'T GET ME wrong, I like trains as much as the next guy. **I'll happily spend hours building the perfect layout in *Open Transport Tycoon Deluxe* before switching to *Railroad Tycoon 3* to watch the money roll in. But a train simulator? I've never delved that deep into the world of steam power.**

RailWorks is essentially a skeleton, ready to be built upon with overpriced DLC from other devs. The core game only gives you a limited selection of train routes from around the world.

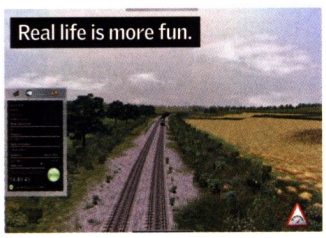
Having picked out a route and a subsequent scenario, what comes next is a meandering drive from station A to station B, picking up passengers and adhering to the law of the tracks (watch for red signals while driving within the speed limit). Thrilling stuff.

For those who want less structure, Free Mode removes the mission handholding and, for customisation, there's the Route Editor.

When you're placed behind the controls of your locomotive, the game picks up a bit. That childhood dream to become a train driver takes over as you slowly pick up speed. You'll happily chug along, pulling the horn, taking over the rails. Then you'll realise this is it. You've got 30 lovingly recreated miles of track to sit through before the next station. Then you'll jam the throttle to full and career into the back of a slow-moving commuter service.

OK, I'm not playing it as I should, but I always wanted to be a suicidal train driver. Realistically, this is a game for those who need no convincing. They're already behind the controls of the 19.17 to York. For everyone else, don't bother.

Marco Fiori



PCZONE 60
Does what it should



TOWING SIMULATOR

Give them a uniform...

DEVELOPER Layernet
PUBLISHER Layernet
WEBSITE layernet.de
ETA Out now
PRICE £17.99

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
1.5GHz Processor, 512MB RAM and a 128MB graphics card.





THE MOST SURPRISING thing about *Towing Simulator*, other than it actually exists – seriously, I'm reviewing a simulator about towing parked cars away. This is actually a thing – is that it isn't the only entrant in the genre of vehicular removal simulations. There's another one out there, *Tow Truck Simulator 2010*. **There's apparently enough of an interest to support two strands of this patently absurd application of computer code. It's *PES* and *FIFA* all over again.**

You can only hope that *Tow Truck Simulator 2010* is better than this game; that it has been crafted by people who really care about towing illegally parked cars away, as *Towing Simulator* is so sloppily produced it can't even get its own name right. The box says '*Towing*', the title screen in-game calls itself '*Tow Truck*'.

TOWING SHAME

Playing the thing is no better. There's more enjoyable gaming to be had de-worming a rabid dog (better graphics too). You have a whole mini-city to patrol yet all the cars to tow handily cluster around your depot.

Missions ask you to tow 15 cars away but give you no option to reload a saved game if you invariably mess up. Surely this shouldn't be so hard to achieve? It's not like loading a saved game is a new, untested science.

Cars get stuck on invisible pixels as you haul them up giving rise to physics demonstrations that would have Newton spinning in his grave, punching through the coffin roof and hunting down the programmers to infect them with his zombie poison for betraying his beloved science so badly.

Supposedly you get better vehicles and equipment as you progress, but unless we're talking *Half-Life 2*'s gravity gun, they won't make this game interesting. In fact, this is easily the most pointless game I've encountered in the history *PC ZONE*. Well done to everybody involved with it.

Paul Presley

PCZONE 4
Fuck off

FOUR OF THE WORST

The crimes against gaming we've seen and rated



TABLOID TYCOON

9% – Issue 169, 2006

SIMULATOR GAMES APPEAR to have overtaken *Tycoon* games as the primary output of the more Eastern European countries, but *Tabloid Tycoon* was so shallow and meaningless as to defy sense. It laboured under the presumption that editors of newspapers spent their days emptying bags of wasps into each others offices. Which might have been funny, if it wasn't such a thinly disguised spreadsheet.

The game's one redeeming feature – the ability to produce a mini-paper that says your brother eats toilet roll or something like that – didn't work.





NEWSWEEK 3 GLOBOCOP

0% – Issue 17, 1994

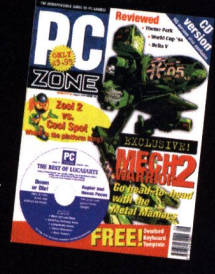
"BASICALLY," SAID DUNCAN MacDonald, back in issue 17, "it's the most appalling thing in the world."

He was talking about the third instalment in the *Newsweek* series, a compilation of magazine content repackaged with beyond-parody jingoism and adverts for Chevrolet.

"What else would you expect from the country that invented rock 'n' roll?" asked the in-game advert, causing every sphincter within a nine-mile radius to pucker in horrified mortification.

Globocop, it turned out, wasn't being used ironically. This piece of multimedia jingoistic excrement was designed to celebrate America's self-appointed role as a worldwide bobby. It wasn't even a game, hence the score.

"This CD shouldn't be on sale. And everyone involved in the project should be boiled alive."





H&M FASHION STUFF PACK

5% – Issue 184, 2007



STEVE HOGARTY'S REVIEW of this execrable collection of branded tat incensed the publisher to such a degree that we were no longer allowed to receive advance copies of *Sims* games.

Higher-ups at the publishing giant, keen to preserve the reputation of their endless series of expansions, were outraged that we dared to suggest it was bad to sell a collection of adverts to brainwashed teenagers for £10.

It's a score we stand by, and a headline that can rightly go down as one of *PC ZONE*'s most heartfelt: "Honestly," it read, "this can fuck right off."

"A collection of adverts to brainwashed teenagers"


This was just insulting.



BIG BROTHER: THE GAME

1% – Issue 96, 2000

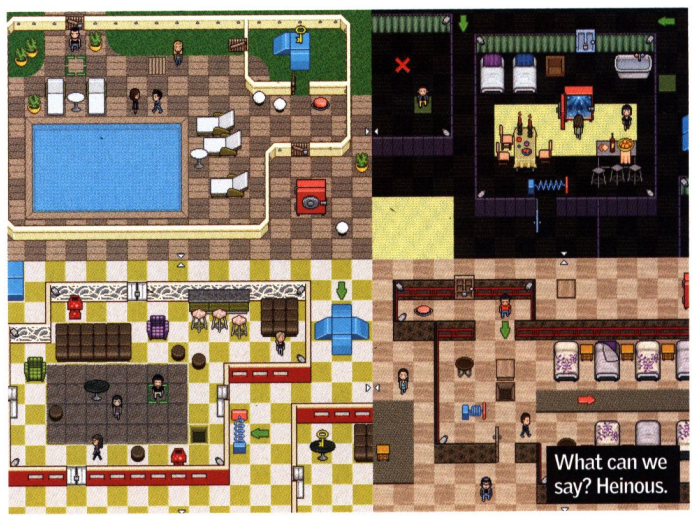


THE TRANSITION INTO the *PC ZONE* website has misreported the score of one into a rather over-generous 10% and that was never Dave Woods' intention.

"If you're looking for new depths to sink to, try to find this game in your local bargain bin. Even the hardened cynics in the *ZONE* office expected more than a couple of slide puzzles."

In the lowest 10% bracket you'll find a bunch of other TV cash-ins, including *Deal or No Deal* (a free *Flash* game) and the abysmal *Little Britain*.

At least Little Britain featured playable games – even if they were as much fun as lowering yourself onto a shattered jam jar.


What can we say? Heinous.



WORKING NINETY-FIVE

Here are the best games we've ever seen: FACT

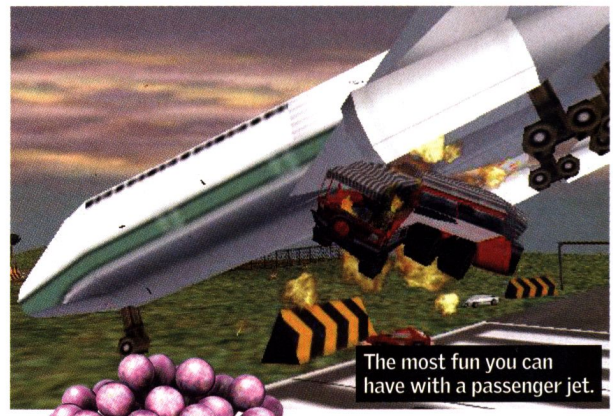
CARMAGEDDON II: CARPOCALYPE NOW

95% – Issue 69, 1998

CHARLIE BROOKER DUBBED *Carpocalypse Now* as "Pornography for anarchists", imagining a world in which Colin McRae would sit in your car, advising you in his taciturn brogue to mow down a set of pedestrians.

"Ah yes, the pedestrians," sighed Brooker, before detailing, in loving detail, the abuse and decapitation of the newly polygonised bumper fodder.

That's the kind of person that *The Guardian* let's write for them, that is.



The most fun you can have with a passenger jet.





SPORE

95% – Issue 199, 2008

BEING AT THE top of Metacritic's pile of scores is usually a sign you've got something wrong.

For all *Spore*'s good points, it didn't deserve the rapturous reception it got. For which Jon Blyth is unreservedly apologetic.

"This game deserves 90, tops. Maybe even 87. When you get past 92, every single point is a world of difference. There's a reason no game has ever scored 100, and that's because the excellence required increases exponentially as you approach perfection. A 100 is not one more than 99 – it is infinitely more than 99. I didn't bear that in mind when I grievously over-scored *Spore*, and if I convinced anyone to buy it, then I can only say, "well, it was still pretty good."





Good. Not great.

WE GOT IT WRONG!

FRONTIER: ELITE 2

95% – Issue 9, 1993



BACK IN THE days when playing games involved an intimate knowledge of IRQ conflicts, SoundBlaster drivers and how to go through your autoexec.bat file line by line, David Braben's sequel to the awesome *Elite* blew us all away.

Speaking of Elitism, issue 9 also featured a cut-out keyboard template for *Aces Over Europe* that you could use to remind yourself what button did what. And the consoles call us highbrow.



WORLD OF WARCRAFT

95% – Issue 152, 2004



PAUL PRESLEY WAS a dissenting voice at the time. He genuinely seemed to think that Blizzard's first MMO could break outside the hardcore nerd circles, and find popular appeal. He was wrong, of course, all it did was turn millions more people into hardcore nerds.

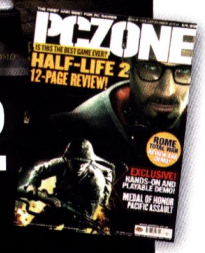
But the editorial mandate came down that *WOW* was not a *ZONE* game, it was for those translucent inhumans that read [redacted].

Years later, there we remained reluctanct to feature *WOW* on the cover, feeling that it was "goblins and all that shit". We caved in though.



The *PC ZONE* Morloc parade.





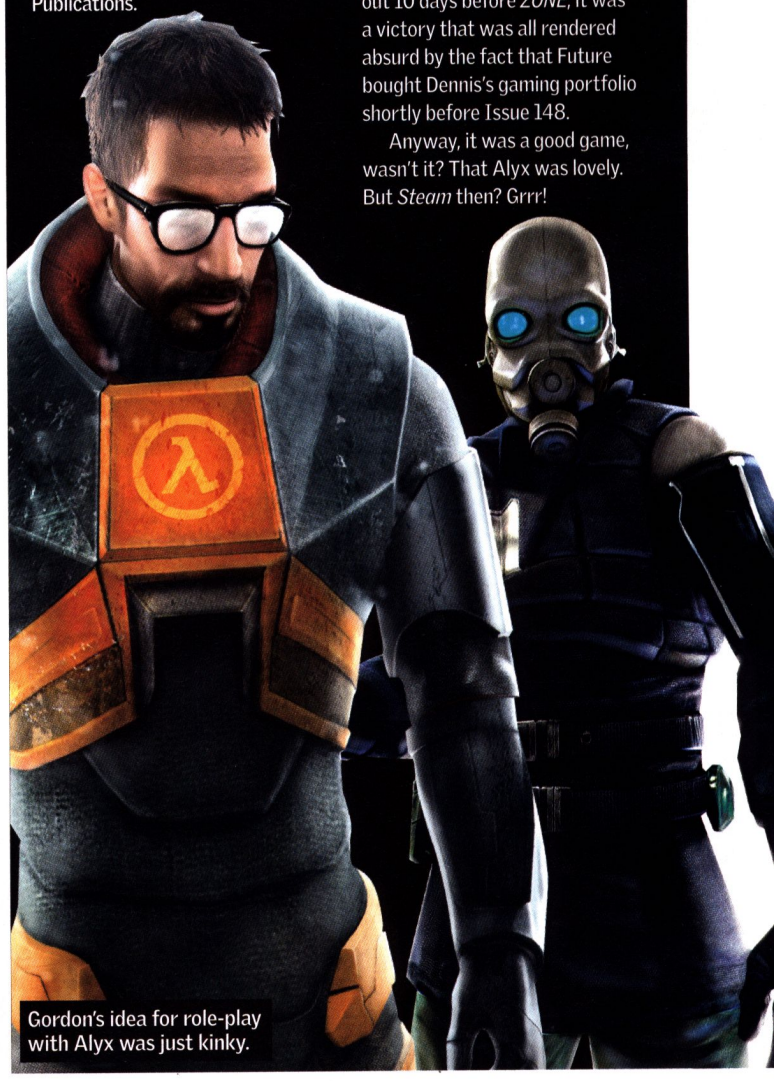
HALF-LIFE 2

97% – Issue 148, 2004

SIX YEARS AGO, and *Half-Life 2* was the biggest thing in PC gaming. And it came out at a time when *PC ZONE* was still owned by Dennis Publications.

The enmity with *PC Gamer* was at its most turbulent, personal and unrepeatable during this time, and although *Gamer* got their review out 10 days before *ZONE*, it was a victory that was all rendered absurd by the fact that Future bought Dennis's gaming portfolio shortly before Issue 148.

Anyway, it was a good game, wasn't it? That Alyx was lovely. But *Steam* then? Grrr!



Gordon's idea for role-play with Alyx was just kinky.



THE LAST SU

We gathered together the disciples of PC ZONE for one last Supertest and asked one last question. If you had 24 hours to live, what game would you play in your final moments? Which one would distract you from the end of the world? Read on. Enjoy. Goodbye.

RICHIE If you were about to die would you play a game that you've played before? That's the question.

LOG I think I would because would you want your last minutes to be spent trying to figure out a potentially frustrating game?

RICHIE Yeah, but you wouldn't want to spend your last day playing a game, let's be honest.

WILL Let's imagine you were spending your last day on Earth and it was a new game you'd never played, and you were playing with the resolution, and then you had to invert the mouse, and like, you know, you're playing and you don't know the keys and all the time you're thinking, "Oh my God, I'm gonna die and I've just spent all my time just trapped inside the fucking toolbox!"

DAVE Yeah and what if it didn't work after all that?

WILL Imagine if you were playing *World of Warcraft*, and then you had to download a 5GB patch.

EVERYONE (laughs)



THE DISCIPLES
David Brown
Will Porter
Jon (Log) Blyth
Richie Shoemaker
Nick Brakespear
Steve Hogarty
Adam Glick

[P]PERTEST

LOG So just to clarify the rules of this, do we die at midnight...

NICK Are we setting a timer now?

LOG No, I just want to know the rules I'm labouring under if I've got to have this hypothetical last day on Earth. How do you die? Does someone come along and kill you?

RICHIE Let's say it's like *PC ZONE*, the last issue, and you're allowed to write about one particular game.

NICK Wait, you have to *write* about it?

EVERYONE (indignant grumbling)

RICHIE Well that could be the rules, I'm just saying. Or you could play a game for the last issue of *PC ZONE*...

WILL And then someone will come and shoot you, and that'll be the last thing anyone remembers you for. There should be death in there somewhere.

DAVE Or if you complete the game, then you have to put a bullet into your head.

LOG Do it yourself?

DAVE Yeah.

RICHIE Well if it's about completing, then clearly it's gonna be an MMO.

EVERYONE (laughs)

DAVE You level up, and then that's it. You get to level 80, pow.

NICK Yeah but it doesn't stop there. Maybe there's a hitman after you or something. You get hit.

DAVE What, once you complete the game, that triggers the hitman?

EVERYONE (laughs)

NICK By writing about the game, you breach some corporate rule, and the PR sends a hitman, perhaps.

LOG Oh, which embargo would you most like to break?

EVERYONE (more laughter)

WILL Well OK, I think we've clearly set the ground rules...

LOG So now we know what we're doing it's...

NICK Do we?

LOG No, we've... the waters have been even more muddied. So... it's our last day on Earth.



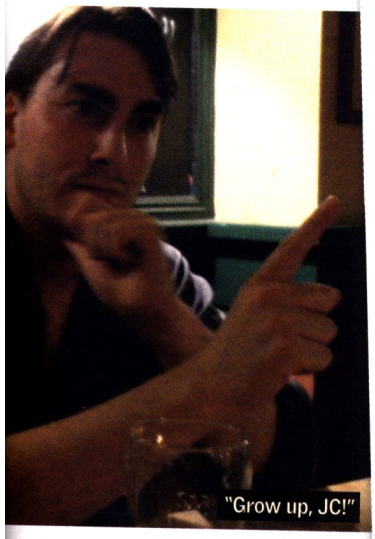
WILL I'd play *Deus Ex*.
EVERYONE (silence)
WILL Because you wouldn't finish it... or I'd play *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines*, because I'd just play the start, before it goes shit, and I'd be having a nice time, and then the world would end, and I'd never know how bad it was gonna get.
RICHIE Well, because you've already played it before you'd get further into it and think, "Shit! I've wasted my time!"
LOG But would you slow down and go, "Oh no, it's gonna get shit soon, I'm gonna stop here."
NICK Well, you could just pause the game when you get to Jeanette's ragdoll boobs.
WILL And just watch them?
NICK Just end your life with those floaty boobs.
WILL That's certainly possible.
NICK They are hypnotic.
LOG But if you wank that takes two hours off the clock.
EVERYONE (laughs)
WILL Is that another rule?
LOG Well, if you did wank with one hour left to live, you'd be cheating the rules, so that's fair enough.


Will's game turns out to be *Deus Ex*.

"Imagine if you were playing WoW for the last time ever and had to download a 5GB patch."

DAVE *Deus Ex* is the first game then. So let's talk about *Deus Ex*.
WILL It's awesome, and I'd still do stuff that I hadn't necessarily done before even though I've played it loads of times.
RICHIE Oh, like masturbate?
EVERYONE (silence)
WILL Hmm?
RICHIE Nevermind.
EVERYONE (laughs)
LOG I'd like to be presented with the moral consequences of my decisions on the day when the end is coming.
WILL On my last day on Earth, I wouldn't feel guilt, I'd just play bad.
LOG Oh, you'd just empty that guy's bank account and listen to him whinge.
WILL Yeah, I'd just shoot everyone in the face and be as nihilistic as I can.
NICK Just waste an hour throwing potted plants at Manderley.
WILL Yeah, yeah.
NICK "Grow up, JC!"
DAVE But then you might not like the game, because you've changed the game, you've changed it into some sort of mindless shoot-everyone-in-the-head simulator.
WILL No, I think that'd be a good release for me, and I just think that if we're talking about the best PC game for *PC ZONE* to die on, and for me to die on, it'd probably be *Deus Ex* just because it's that good. And also it's a bit moody. It's a bit depressing, and my last day on Earth would be a bit depressing.
NICK Why is it a bit depressing?


Blue vs. Red, the eternal struggle.

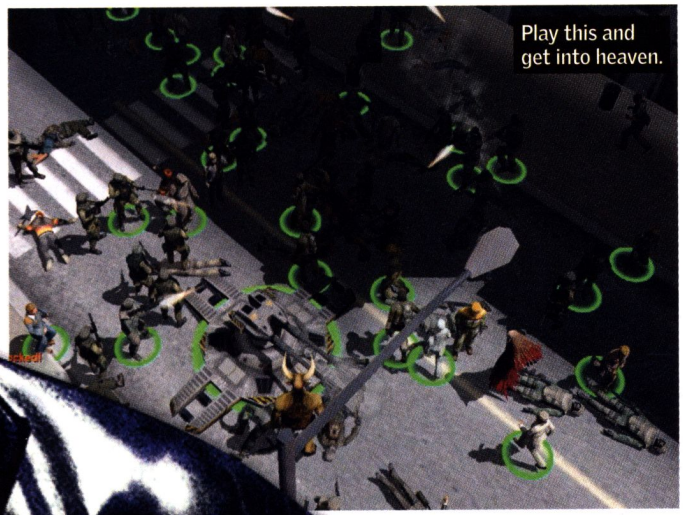

"Grow up, JC!"

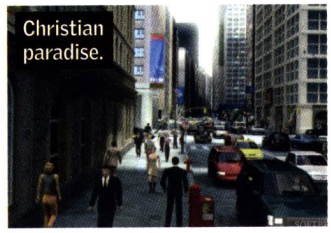

"Seabiscuit. Is that a book? "

WILL Because the sun doesn't come out and...
NICK Ah, but his vision is augmented, so the sun doesn't need to come out.
DAVE If he took his shades off, suddenly all the light would come in and burn his eyes out.
NICK A bit like the intro to *Fallout 2*, where it has the little animated bloke leaving the vault for the first time and his eyes get burned out.
DAVE Yeah it's the same in *Metro 2033*.
NICK Is it?
DAVE You're not allowed to go outside in *Metro*.
LOG You go outside immediately!
DAVE In the book, sorry.
WILL Oh, God, sorry, in the book!
LOG Oh, right, is it a fucking book Supertest?
EVERYONE (laughs)
RICHIE We got ourselves a reader here...
LOG Get 'im boys.
WILL (shaking his head) In the book...
DAVE Sorry, I read the book before-
WILL ...*PC ZONE* Supertest...
DAVE I do apologise. My bad.
NICK It's like the people who go on about how fantastic *Halo* is, and then you say, well, it's not really that fantastic, and they say "Ah, but the books are really good."
LOG (in pompous voice) "*The Extended Universe*."
RICHIE I try to write fiction occasionally, so I have a copy of the first *Halo* novel on my desk to remind me how shit you can be at writing fiction.
LOG Is it the kind of stuff that 14 year-old kids just want to see like, "he grunts as he performs a feat of strength".
RICHIE Yes. Exactly. I mean it's worse than *Warhammer*.
DAVE What about the *Doom* books?
LOG I haven't read those. Have you?


I absolutely read books

DAVE I read the first one. It was dreadful.
RICHIE They were fairly bad, but compared to *Halo*, they're Shakespeare.
NICK I have an *Eve Online* book.
RICHIE The first one?
NICK Er, *The Empyrean Age*.
RICHIE Yeah, I'm reading that at the moment.
NICK I've read the first few pages. It's a very big book though. Not sure if I'll finish it.
LOG I just like the fact that after howling with derision at Dave for mentioning books, it's become a fucking book Supertest.
EVERYONE (laughs)
DAVE Yeah and I actually read a book, before it was a game.
LOG (camp voice) *Seabiscuit*, is that a book? Sounds like one.
DAVE *TV Guide*, that's a book.
WILL Alright Log, what game would you play?
LOG I would give up on a life of atheism and play *Left Behind*, the strategy game, because I think that would be one way to let God know that I'm sorry for everything I said about him.
WILL Would you convert the hippies and kill the insolent?
LOG Well, as far as I remember the game I'd start off praying for them, but in the end I'll end up butchering them.
DAVE And that's just how God really works.
LOG Well yeah, you'd pray for... what is it? They're playing electric guitars in the street and that lowers your morale, but you can pray and that lets you walk past them.
WILL And then your ascension to heaven would be assured?
LOG Well, they wouldn't have made the game if it didn't guarantee you a place in heaven. There'd be no ulterior motives for the people writing the best-selling *Left Behind* novel.
RICHIE So you'd be doing it for purely selfish, covering-your-own-arse reasons.
LOG Well yeah, I think you can actually pull the wool over God's eyes in that respect...
RICHIE But if he reads the issue of *PC ZONE*, and says "Hang on..."
EVERYONE (laughs)
WILL "Didn't I kill this off?"
LOG Well yeah, but he's got to forgive me. I said I'm sorry. And I'm playing the game.
DAVE You would almost be recanting on your deathbed.
LOG Yes. I mean you can still recant on your deathbed even if you've spent your whole life saying "I'm gonna be a cock". Surely?


Play this and get into heaven.


Christian paradise.


Oh! A Satan chopper.

WILL So Richie, what would be yours?

RICHIE I'm still finding this very difficult to answer, because I'm thinking I've got a whole list of games that I would play if I ended up in prison, and therefore had time to play them... but, my last night... it's very hard. I mean...

LOG Would it be *Virtually Jenna*?

EVERYONE (laughs)

RICHIE I'm kinda edging towards something like *Baldur's Gate*, which is something I've never actually played, which I know I should have played, or maybe *Planescape: Torment*. Which is a game that everyone raves about, but I've never played.

WILL I've never played *Planescape: Torment* either.

NICK You're all a bunch of heretics.

LOG Isn't it very read-y?

WILL I've always kinda sorta pretended that I have, just to look good.

EVERYONE (murmuring of agreement)

"I've got a whole list of games that I would play if I ended up in prison, and therefore had the time to play"

NICK Have you played *Planescape: Torment*, Dave?

DAVE I have played it, yes. I've nearly finished it.

RICHIE Well, it is practically a book.

DAVE I couldn't finish it because my character... I made the rookie error of like, not making my character one thing, he wasn't 100% fighter or something, so he was a bit weak.

LOG What sort of percent fighter was he then?

DAVE Like 50/50. You know like a sort of jack-of-all-trades sort of thing. You can't do that in RPGs and win.

WILL Isn't the point that you have a magic flying skull and...

DAVE Well there's one bit where you're by yourself and you have to fight yourself. But you have to fight a hardcore version of yourself.

NICK I thought it was three of yourself.

DAVE Yeah, one you can talk your way out of, and one you can fight your way out of...

LOG What's the third way? Fuck?

EVERYONE (laughs)

DAVE So which one would you actually choose then? If it was *Planescape: Torment*, you'd never finish it in a day.

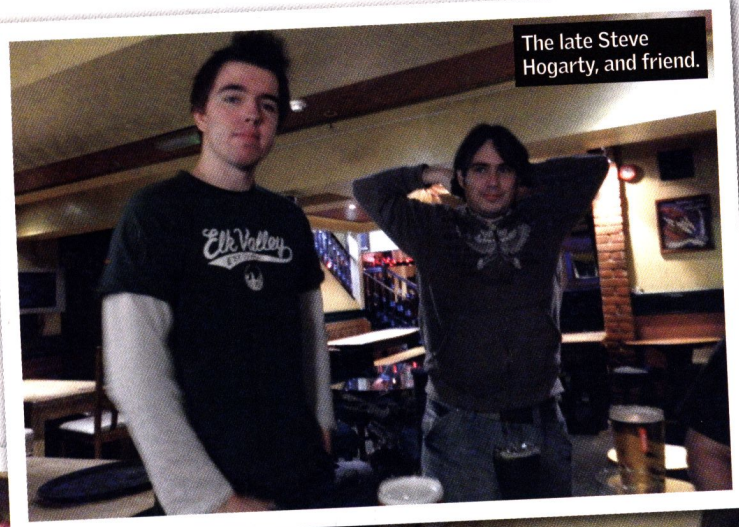
RICHIE No, so that's the thing; there's all these games I'd like to play because I've held them off for so long. But mostly they're games I've held off because I don't have the time to play them. So you'll have to come back to me.

NICK Maybe the question is, not what game you'd play in the sense of whether you'd complete it or not, but which one would leave you in a serene state, ready to accept death?

RICHIE Possibly... *Spheres of Chaos*.

WILL Oh that's a good one. That's going well back.

RICHIE Yeah.



The late Steve Hogarty, and friend.



"Would it be *Virtually Jenna*?"

WILL Is that the one with all the fireworks?

RICHIE Just a screensaver gone mad.

WILL Yeah, that's an excellent one. That'd be great, yeah, because you'd get so absorbed in it and you wouldn't even notice the Grim Reaper creeping up.

LOG Well OK, what is it then?

RICHIE It's basically *Asteroids*, mixed with a mid-'90s screensaver.

LOG Sounds a bit like a Jeff Minter thing, is it?

WILL Well it is just *Asteroids*, made with a few more bits, like floaty pinky things.

LOG It's not like 3D *Pipes* is it?

RICHIE Whenever you hit an asteroid or a sphere, it basically explodes into loads of colour. But rather than like, wiping the screen, it just explodes into another explosion you've done. And it's just fucking nuts.

WILL And I guess the chaos is like, you know the tricky '90s chaos theory like, zooming in and in, kinda guess that's why it's called that because it's like that.

LOG What, you mean like *Mandelbrot* on the Atari ST? *My First Mandelbrot Generator* was amazing.

WILL Maybe you can have that?

EVERYONE (laughs)

Adam Glick walks out for no reason.

RICHIE So regardless of whether you had a night to live or five nights to live, if there was a game you wish you'd played or... everyone talks about particular series or whatever you wish you'd played but you haven't had time for...

NICK But what if it turned out to be shit though?

RICHIE Well that's the gamble. For example, I've never played a *Gears of War* game, and I've never played *Halo*...

NICK So a bit like a Russian Roulette of games, really, in your final moments. The last thing you do in your life and it could turn out to be utter bollocks.

RICHIE Yes, exactly.

NICK I suppose you might want to go for that, in your last moment. The ultimate gamble.

WILL Dave, what's yours?

DAVE I don't know. I'll let Rick, er, Nick answer first.

NICK Don't call me Rick.

DAVE Yeah, I'll let Rick answer his first. I'm still cogitating.

NICK Well at the moment, I'm leaning towards *DEFCON*.

RICHIE I like your thinking.

NICK Because it's kinda hypnotic and soothing, and it has all that sort of quiet choral music in the background, but at



the same time it's thoroughly depressing. I mean, there's something really unsettling about it...

RICHIE But I mean, if you're about to face your doom it's probably uplifting.

NICK It's all at once soothing but kinda depressing in the sense of it's all a bit pointless.

LOG It's got that reassuring strapline: "Everyone dies".

NICK I once played a game of *DEFCON*, where I had zero casualties. I can't remember how I did that, but I did it once.



EVERYONE (silence)

LOG Did you have any opponents?

EVERYONE (laughs)

DAVE He beat himself.

NICK There's something unsettling... whenever you launch a nuke, you feel like, "Aha, my nuke reached its target, I'm filled with satisfaction", but then you see the death count and you think, well, I just killed a million civilians.

LOG But surely you're shooting people on a one-to-one basis in most games and that's more... well, one person's death is a tragedy, a million is a statistic.

NICK Yeah, I dunno, I mean I've played *Soldier of Fortune* and *Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix*, and I happily carved open somebody's head just to admire the physics of it but...

LOG But yet a number going from zero to a million is shocking? Did you imagine every life snuffed out?

NICK The way it's portrayed as just... you hear a quiet rumble, and there's a slight sort of glow... and then the number pops up. It's kinda haunting.

LOG I must admit it is amazing the way the game does that. It's understandable.

NICK I'd be ready to go, after that. Because I'd think, well...

RICHIE ...well, there's nobody left. There's nobody to fuck, what am I going to do?

LOG I'm a monster, I deserve it.

EVERYONE (laughs)

WILL Another good one would be *Black & White*, because as you're playing it, whenever one of your little blokes dies it whispers, "death".

NICK Oh, I tell you what...

WILL (whispers repeatedly) "Deeeaath"

NICK ...creeped the crap out of me in *Black & White 2*, was that I noticed it was calling me by my name.

WILL Yeah, it does that.

NICK It goes, "Niiiick". And I'd be like, "What? What!?". But I think I'd be more annoyed with *Black & White*.

DAVE You'd just get so annoyed with your creature just not doing what you told it to. Again. For the rest of your existence in heaven you'd be like...

NICK ...Why does he keep throwing shit at my people?

EVERYONE (laughs)

LOG Did you try rubbing his shit on him?

DAVE I didn't try doing that, no. That's a different game.

LOG Imagine if God picked us up like little dolls and made us do it.

EVERYONE (laughs)

LOG Or just wanked one of us off and slung it up a girl.

NICK Like the lottery hand comes down. "It's you!"

WILL Dave, you can't dodge it any more mate.

DAVE I don't know, I don't know. I've been thinking the whole time, and for some reason I can't rid of the thought of Football Manager.

EVERYONE (laughs)

DAVE I don't know why.

RICHIE That's crossed my mind as well.

DAVE I honestly don't know why.

WILL That's such a lovely image of the bombs starting to rain down around you, and you're just there – who's your team?

DAVE Well, Liverpool usually.

WILL Liverpool. A reserves match. And there's God.

EVERYONE (laughs)

RICHIE But there is something immortal about football. In the sense that, OK, if you can pull of the most amazing victory you'll be immortalised.

NICK God would pick up the laptop and see your name on the top of the high score table and think "He won the Indonesian Super League. He's in."

DAVE I'm not even sure I want to play *Football Manager*, but I cannot get it out of my mind. Because I could play that for 24 hours and if I get bored, I just start a new game as a new club. Seems like a boring choice. *Doom*, maybe. That's probably the game I've played the most. When I was younger.

LOG Would you go in all the secret rooms? Or would you just run through it.

DAVE I'd put it on Nightmare.

WILL You know what would be good? If we were all about to die, we got together and played *Quake III*.

EVERYONE (murmur of consensus)

DAVE What's the level with the bouncing?

RICHIE The Longest Yard.

NICK Although personally I always preferred *Unreal Tournament*.

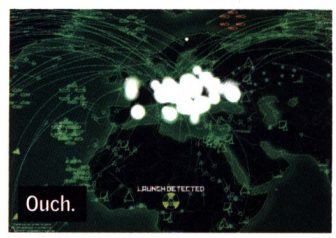
WILL As did *PC ZONE*. Technically. But then *Quake III* was played more. Am I right in saying this? That it was actually played more in the office?

RICHIE No, we played *Unreal Tournament* more, then as the weeks went by, we got more and more into *Quake III*. *Unreal Tournament* probably had more people playing in a single match, but six months later, even though we only had four or five playing a match, it was a good match.

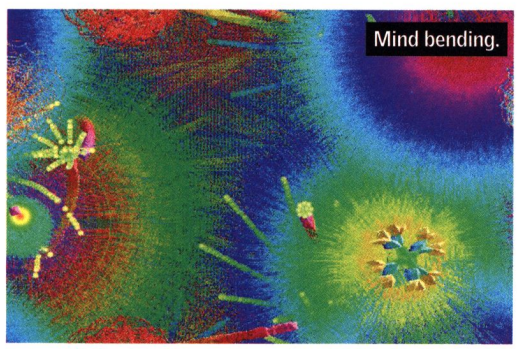
WILL If I'm right, id didn't talk to us for about two or three years after we gave *UT* more?



Soothing. Depressing. Pretty.



Ouch.


Mind bending.


Ah, a rainbow of death.





RICHIE Yeah, it took a while. But I think we were entirely correct about that.

Steve Hogarty arrives late.

DAVE So Steve, what game would you play if you were dying the next day or the world was ending.

LOG No, you die at midnight. Or wait, do you die at midnight? Or when it's over?

NICK Did we decide that?

DAVE No, you just die.

LOG You just die. You're just going to die.

STEVE So what's that game where you have sex with lots of people? Do I have to play a game or...

WILL You're on your own in a room and there's nothing else.

LOG We did say if you have a wank it takes two hours off your limit.

EVERYONE (laughs)

STEVE Doctors say it takes two years off your life as well.

LOG What, every one?

WILL So that's basically what's happened. You've basically wanked all your life, wanked it all away.

LOG Your nuts have packed in. You wouldn't be able to wank even if you tried. In fact, that's what's wrong with you. That's why you're dying.

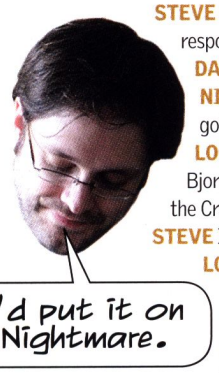
WILL We've covered all this ground.

DAVE We haven't covered that particular ground.

STEVE I'd have a quick go of *Peggle*.

RICHIE That's good thinking.

LOG But Steve, you've already got all of the achievements and all three trophies on *Peggle*. What do you think there's left to go back to?



STEVE Er, I direct your attention to *Peggle Nights*.

EVERYONE (laughs)

STEVE It's one of, if not the only, game that has ever taken my mind of masturbation for more than five minutes at a time.

LOG (sounds impressed) Oh, wow.

STEVE That's not true. Don't respond as if that's true.

DAVE Make sure that gets in.

NICK That is definitely going in.

LOG If you had to sleep with Bjorn the Unicorn or Claude the Crab, which one would it be?

STEVE If I had to do one of them?

LOG Yeah. If you had to do any of the *Peggle* masters.

STEVE It would be er, the name of the pumpkin? Reginald? Renfield. Renfield the pumpkin. Because he's been kind to me.

EVERYONE (laughs)

STEVE Spooky balls!

WILL That's nice. It's nice that you're going to pay him back in your last moments.

STEVE I don't think it's within the capabilities of the game to interact with the characters like that.

NICK He'd know, somehow, your feelings.

STEVE So, that's me.

WILL Excellent answer.

RICHIE Yeah, I have to agree.

DAVE So *Peggle* might win. *DEFCON* doesn't win. It's going in, that's two votes...

RICHIE No, I think, in my dark soul...

NICK That's it, there we go!

RICHIE I think in my dark soul, *DEFCON* wins.

NICK The beautiful desolation of *DEFCON*.

RICHIE Nobody wins!

NICK Exactly!

WILL I'm willing to change my vote for *Spheres of Chaos* to *DEFCON* at the last minute, if that is the prevailing wind. It's nice to have a little bit of closure, as everybody knows.

LOG So closure, in terms of your death, would be everyone dying as well? That's the only way you'll die happy?

EVERYONE (laughs)

NICK Well yeah, I mean if you're gonna have a miserable time of it, you don't want to miss anything.

LOG Am I the only person with an upbeat attitude? I'm the one that's having the Rapture and going to heaven.

NICK Well there we go, that's the thing. *DEFCON* can be viewed as the atheist perspective on your choice. Everybody dies... you could see the end of the world as the Rapture, nuclear warfare as the Rapture...

EVERYONE (silence)

LOG I'm not sure that holds coherent logic.

NICK Possibly not, but...

LOG Nuclear war is the atheist Rapture?

NICK It could be. I mean...

EVERYONE (laughs)

NICK That's the extent of my argument. Yeah. End of the world, either way, so...

Adam Glick springs up from under the table.

GLICK Is that not a bit of a depressing game to pick? For your last hours?

NICK (slightly startled) Perhaps, but as we discussed, there's something strangely, hauntingly, beautiful about the way the end of the world is portrayed.

STEVE There's something hauntingly beautiful about you dying anyway, so why not enjoy that, and also enjoy some *Mario Kart*, or something?

RICHIE See that's why *Peggle* just fits so well, and it's so hard to choose between them.

NICK But, see, then would you die feeling like you were just one step away from yet another achievement? So, in the afterlife, maybe you'd spend all of eternity seeking some unachievable achievement...

WILL But you'd die knowing that Bjorn was happy...

STEVE ...and you'd finish a game of *Peggle* without ever making Bjorn cry.

LOG That's true. I always emergency shut down my computer because I can't stand his face.

STEVE Just kick the plug out of the wall.

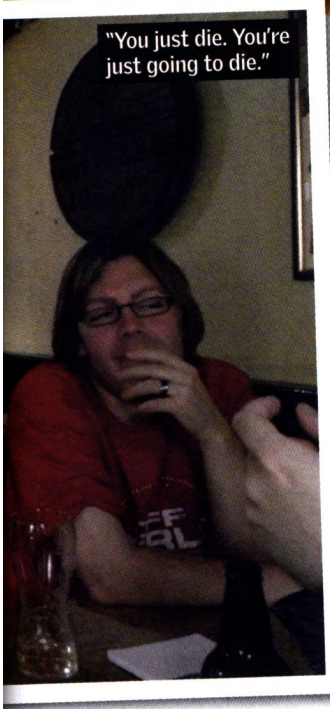
LOG Imagine if you did that and he said, "it looks like you pulled the plug out of the wall", and he starts wailing inconsolably.

EVERYONE (laughs)

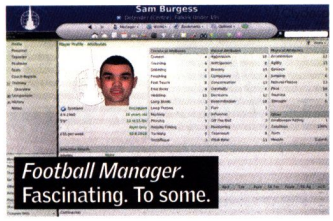
STEVE ...these horrible squeals coming out of the speakers and you turn it off, and it's still coming out.

NICK But see, that's the question you'd have to face, dealing with *Peggle*. Would such things be in the afterlife?

"Your nuts have packed in. You wouldn't be able to wank even if you tried. That's why you're dying"


"You just die. You're just going to die."


Goooooaaal!



Football Manager. Fascinating. To some.



DEFCON: the game we want to play as we die.

"There's something hauntingly beautiful about you dying anyway, so why not enjoy that?"

DAVE Would Bjorn be waiting for you in the afterlife?
NICK Yeah.
GLICK I don't think Popcap has programmed that in.
LOG If the afterlife was a game, what game would you want it to be?
RICHIE Well, *EVE Online*, sorry.
WILL I like the idea of it being *World of Warcraft*.
NICK Why? The endgame is a bit disappointing.
WILL Yeah, but there would be no endgame. It'd just be all of us lot running around, playing with sexy elves...
DAVE Heaven can only be disappointing, so it kinda works out doesn't it?
WILL This is getting theological now.
DAVE It can only be disappointing because everyone says how amazing it's going to be.
WILL But heaven, by definition, isn't disappointing, it's awesome.
LOG You're stripped of your expectations so everything's brilliant.
DAVE You'd get there and think, "Oh, there's no bumper pool here."
LOG There's no bumper pool?
DAVE Bumper pool. You know, it's like... oh never mind.
LOG No no, what do you want in heaven?
DAVE It's like a pool table but with bumpers on it. Almost like pinball.
LOG Oh, right.
STEVE No, they don't have those in heaven.
EVERYONE (laughs)
DAVE So it'd be disappointing, because you want some of that, and it wouldn't be there.
WILL But you'd be the first person actually wanting that. Everyone else is at one with their Lord God, and you're all, "No, fuck off!"
DAVE So, who do we have left?
LOG Well, Adam's barely spoken for the entire evening, so...
DAVE Adam Glick, what game would you pick?
GLICK Well, unfortunately David, I'm unable to answer your question, as I'm not a real person. I'm merely a well-developed pseudonym that your team invented to hide staff shortages and a dwindling budget. But if I had to pick a game... *Little Britain*. PCZ


More Brown than at a dirty protest.

Budget

David Brown **delves into the bin for one last budget round-up**

COLIN MCRAE'S DIRT

PUBLISHER Mastertronic
WEBSITE mastertronic.com **PRICE** £4.99

BUDGET GAME OF THE MONTH

USURPED BY ITS younger, more charismatic sibling, *DiRT* is still a high-quality racer that's well worth the £5 asking price. It's not even that old, so there's no question of it still looking the part, and it also has the advantage of not featuring as much crap music as *DiRT 2* and guys saying, "Dude!", and "Gnarly race, man". *DiRT* does feature everyone's (least) favourite driver, Travis Pastrana, on vocal duties. Just not as annoyingly as in the sequel.

The actual game itself is as slick as hell, but not as slick as the second game – something you can apply to any aspect of *DiRT*, a great game that's not as good as the next one. It does have some ideas that didn't make it into the superior sequel though, such as Crossover races, but when it comes to multiplayer, it's even more disappointing now that Codies have decided to give each racer their own instanced version of the track, rather than racing together as a group.

So ignore any gripes, ignore the fact *DiRT*'s got a sequel that's better and buy it if you want some very cheap, but still very good, rallying. There's only game out there that's better.



Advertising galore.

PCZONE 83 Mucky fun



THIS MONTH PCZONE SAVED MONEY BY...

Log burned his house to the ground, saving lots on the rent.
SAVING £1,000



David killed his parents and stole their money, solving two problems at once.
SAVING £400



Future killed *PC ZONE*, saving them a few pennies.
SAVING 5p

TOM CLANCY'S H.A.W.X.

PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia **WEBSITE** focusmm.co.uk **PRICE** £9.99

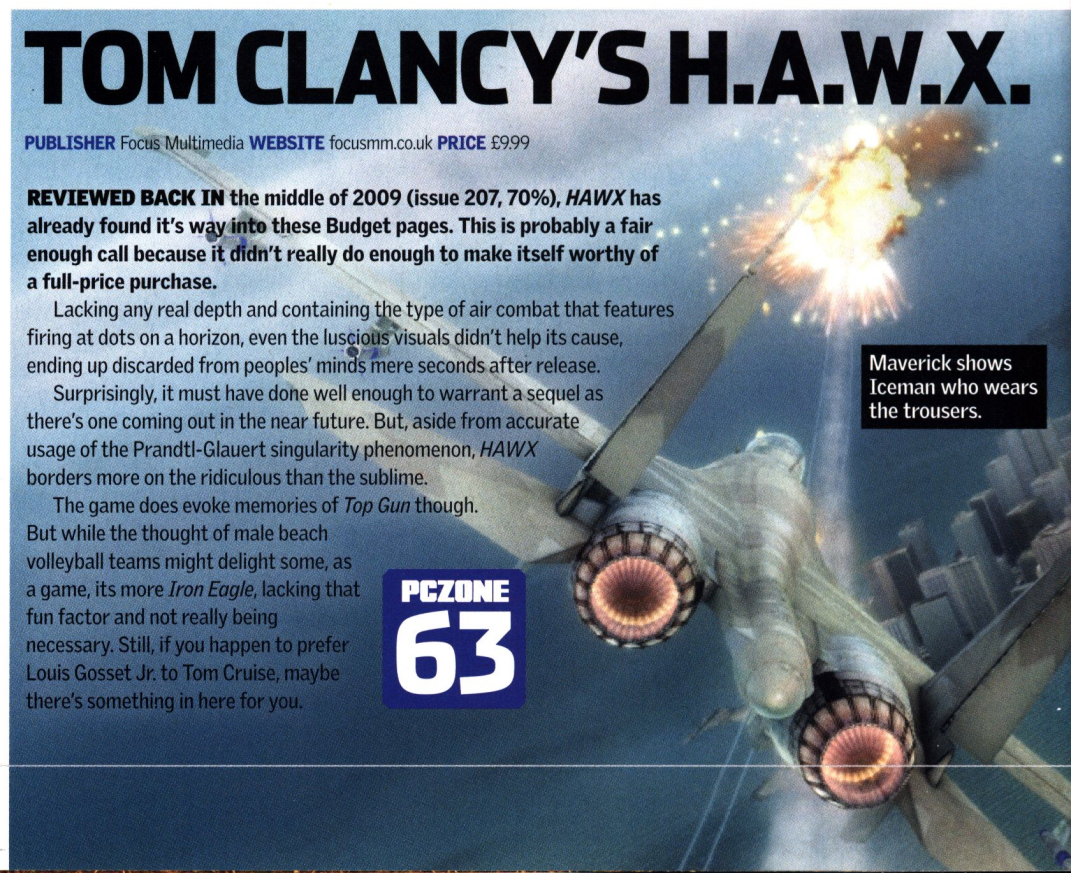
REVIEWED BACK IN the middle of 2009 (issue 207, 70%), *HAWX* has already found it's way into these Budget pages. This is probably a fair enough call because it didn't really do enough to make itself worthy of a full-price purchase.

Lacking any real depth and containing the type of air combat that features firing at dots on a horizon, even the luscious visuals didn't help its cause, ending up discarded from peoples' minds mere seconds after release.

Surprisingly, it must have done well enough to warrant a sequel as there's one coming out in the near future. But, aside from accurate usage of the Prandtl-Glauert singularity phenomenon, *HAWX* borders more on the ridiculous than the sublime.

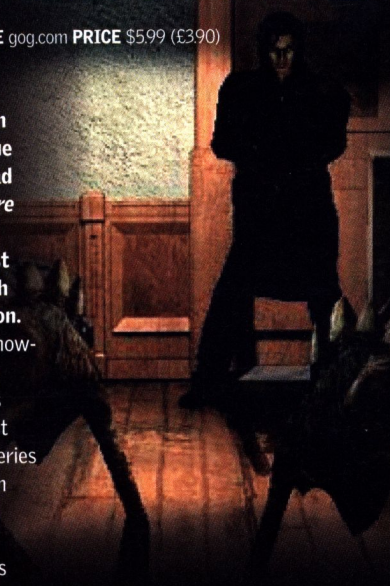
The game does evoke memories of *Top Gun* though. But while the thought of male beach volleyball teams might delight some, as a game, its more *Iron Eagle*, lacking that fun factor and not really being necessary. Still, if you happen to prefer Louis Gosset Jr. to Tom Cruise, maybe there's something in here for you.

PCZONE 63


Maverick shows Iceman who wears the trousers.

ALONE IN THE DARK: A NEW NIGHTMARE

PUBLISHER Good Old Games **WEBSITE** gog.com **PRICE** $5.99 (£3.90)



THE BEST THING you can say about this, the fourth iteration in the *Alone in the Dark* series (issue 197, 46%), is that it wasn't as bad as the fifth one. *A New Nightmare* wasn't as ambitious as the fifth instalment, but you could at least play it without driving your teeth deep into your gums in frustration.

A New Nightmare features the now-obligatory hard-as-nails Ed Carnby instead of the pebbles-in-the-shoes moustachioed version from the first three games. This horror survival series just doesn't work with Carnby as an action hero. When he was a boring librarian the terror was amplified significantly, as your clumsy actions seemed to make sense within the context of the game.

The game went back to basics with a big haunted house to explore, which seemed like a backward step, even if the motives were sound. Strangely though, it seems to be more worthy of attention now than it was on its release, as claims to it being "The worst *Alone in the Dark*" have to be re-evaluated after the atrocity that's the fifth game.

You might find yourself hating it again, but at least you won't die while fiddling about with your inventory.

PCZONE 66

SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE AWAKENED

PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia **WEBSITE** focusmm.co.uk **PRICE** £9.99

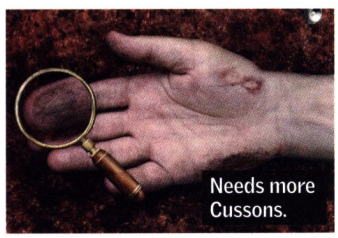
YOU'D THINK THERE was no possible way a developer could fail to produce the goods here, given the two classic inspirations of Sherlock Holmes and HP Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, but Frogwares did just that.

Despite the presence of a grotesque black slug crawling out of a sacrificed corpse, *The Awakened* barely manages to keep its own audience awake, let alone the creatures within it. Perhaps the worst thing is the voice acting, which veers into ludicrous comical cockney territory, and a London which is, as it always is in Frogwares' Holmes games, jarringly devoid of inhabitants.

There's one good thing this game gave us though, and that's the mysterious teleporting Watson, who shadows your every move like a tweed-wearing stalker (bit.ly/creepywatson).

After this came *Nemesis*, where you had to track down French master thief Arsene Lupin, and then Jack the Ripper (in *Sherlock Holmes versus...*). While Holmes managed to defeat all these formidable opponents, he still hasn't cracked his most difficult case, how to make a good game that doesn't bore the arse off everyone playing it. After plenty of attempts, one suspects now that Frogwares just aren't capable of solving this particular conundrum.


Confusing.


Needs more Cussons.

PCZONE 50

AND THE REST...

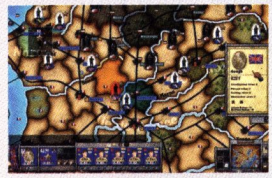
Dirt-cheap golden nuggets we played so you didn't have to



UFO: AFTERLIGHT
GOG.com, $9.99 (£6.40)
One of the new breed of UFO games that resembles the old ones, unlike *XCOM*.
56



INDEPENDENCE WAR 2: EDGE OF CHAOS
GOG.com, $5.99 (£3.90)
Looks long in the tooth, but still packs a laser-y punch.
72



WORLD WAR ONE
Focus Multimedia, £4.99
Ludicrously complex strategy game that manages to make its tutorial impossible to beat.
50

PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET GAMES



MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR
£9.99, *Steam*
The historical RTS game that set the standard for others to follow. Buy it, if only to try out the mods.



THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION GOTY
£14.99, *Steam*
The sequel to *Morrowind* features the massive open-world gameplay expected from *Elder Scrolls* games.



COMPANY OF HEROES
£6.99, *Steam*
A challenging yet fun, WWII RTS that sees you playing Axis and Allies in the days after D-Day.



PSYCHONAUTS
£5.99, *Steam*
You won't have more fun than this psychological platformer unless *Brütal Legend* appears on the PC.



MASS EFFECT
£12.99, *Steam*
The definitive space opera RPG/shooter. A must-play, especially before you start *Mass Effect 2*.

Buyer's Guide

Don't stop buying them until they're bought

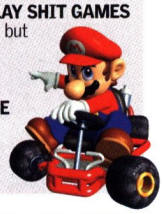
PCZ TOP 5 THINGS WE'LL MISS ABOUT *PC ZONE*

1. **HAVING A JOB** The dole queue beckons...
2. **HAVING MONEY** ...as does a diet of Tesco Value noodles and lager.
3. **BEING PAID TO PLAY GAMES** Come on – dream job, right?
4. **SEEING OUR MATES EVERY DAY** *sniff* Bye chaps and chapesses.
5. **THE READERS** You're a lovely, lovely lot...



PCZ TOP 5 THINGS WE WON'T MISS ABOUT *PC ZONE*

1. **THE READERS** ...of barking mad loons.
2. **COMMUTING** No more morning Tube rides.
3. **WAKING UP IN THE MORNING** Swap a 9-5 grind for *WOW*'s.
4. **HAVING TO PLAY SHIT GAMES** It was our duty, but no longer.
5. ***MARIO KART* PLAYED IN THE BACKGROUND** Does that need explaining?



PCZ TOP 5 THINGS WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TOO

1. **JOBS MAKING GAMES...** After all, we're all experts at playing them.
2. **...WHICH ARE BETTER PAID** Couldn't be worse...
3. **ONLY PLAYING GREAT GAMES** Because we can pick what to play.
4. **A LONG HOLIDAY** Look, we're not unemployed – we're resting.
5. **THE DEMISE OF *PC GAMER*** Unless they give us work, obviously.



FPS



HALF-LIFE 2 + EPISODES
PCZ Issues: 148 (97%), 170 (91%), 187 (82%)
Excelling in terms of action, storyline, emotion and ingenious set pieces, the continuing adventures of Gordon Freeman have yet to be equalled. Yes, a moderate amount of the action has faded through repetition by the time the episodes kick in, but with its Combine-defying freedom fighting, this is still the most finely crafted shooter experience ever released on PC. Gordon's alive, and long may he remain so.



LEFT 4 DEAD
PCZ Issue: 202 – 93%
The only thing the we like more than killing zombies is killing zombies as a team. And that's what *L4D* provides: a chance to scream with your buddies as you kill endless amounts of mindless and murderous plague victims.



TEAM FORTRESS 2
PCZ Issue: 187 – 93%
Beautifully balanced and engaging, Valve's update of the classic mod is a triumph, bringing together the best of online shooters and topping it all off with superb animation that rivals the best Pixar's films.



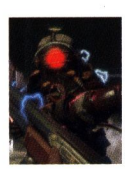
LEFT 4 DEAD 2
PCZ Issue: 214 – 94%
Basically, this is *Left 4 Dead* in the Deep South. Except this one has new modes, new Infected, new campaigns, as well as machettes and chainsaws for some serious slice and dicing. Better than the original.



FAR CRY 2
PCZ Issue 201 – 90%
A triumph of non-linear gameplay, *Far Cry 2* offers an astounding chunk of Africa in which to play with guns, flames and explosions. The residents are too tenacious, but in a world this well-realised, you won't care.



CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 2
PCZ Issue: 215 – 94%
Take all of the greatest action movies of all time, stick them together, and add some semi-manufactured controversies, and you have a massive hit. Still, it's an absolutely great shooter.

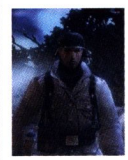


BIOSHOCK
PCZ Issue: 185 – 96%
Despite the recent sequel having better gameplay, *BioShock* is still the superior game. Enter a destroyed Utopia under the sea, terrifying characters and emergent combat make this an unmissable experience.

STRATEGY



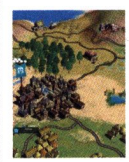
EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 205 – 94%
Vast yet manageable, accessible yet hardcore. All four words, and more, describe the best *Total War* game money can currently buy. With the addition of dramatic sea battles and an extended global campaign map, there's simply nothing else with the same grand scope that remains as easy to get into. We feel that the only game that will topple this game from its perch as the best strategy game around will be the next game in the *Total War* series. It really is that good.



COMPANY OF HEROES
PCZ Issue: 173 – 93%
With this game Relic took the best bits from RTS games and left out the crap, creating a game that's accessible, taxing and exciting. And its expansions *Opposing Fronts* and *Tales of Valor* keep the action coming.



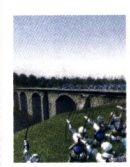
WORLD IN CONFLICT
PCZ Issue: 186 – 92%
A stunning RTS set during the Cold War, offering innovative online play, a solid single-player campaign that combines great gameplay and a good story, jaw-dropping graphics and the best nuclear blast you've seen.



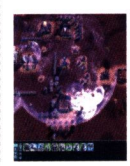
CIVILIZATION IV
PCZ Issue: 162 – 92%
A *Buyer's Guide* without a *Civ* game would be a sorry place, and the latest version is the greatest yet. Now with added warmongering and diplomacy in the expansion packs *Warlords* and *Beyond the Sword*.



SINS OF A SOLAR EMPIRE
PCZ Issue 193 – 91%
This startling beauty of an RTS seemed to come from nowhere, and quickly converted us from indifferent idiots into grateful idiots by surprising us with accessible complexity.



MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 175 – 91%
A blend of maniacal plotting on the strategic map and cheering with delight as your warriors collide spectacularly with your opponents' armies. Middle Ages war fun.



SUPREME COMMANDER
PCZ Issue: 179 – 88%
Huge battles of thousands of air, sea and land units? Giant stompy robots and a superb tactical map? One of the most original RTS titles around? Check, check and check.

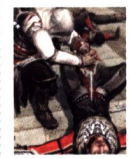
ACTION/ADVENTURE



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV
PCZ Issue: 203 – 91%
We PC users have had to wait a while (OK – we had to wait a bloody age) before we could return to Liberty City with Niko Bellic, but the delay has been worth it. This version of *GTA4* adds graphics that are a cut above those seen on the consoles, expanded multiplayer modes, and an exclusive video editor, to Liberty City's free-roaming world and the sure-to-be-classic storyline of Bellic's American dream becoming an American nightmare.



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
PCZ Issue: 136 – 93%
Payne is getting old, but it shows how to do bullet-time right. Noirish tone, a glowering voice-over and remarkable gun action mean that this is still a force to contend with.



ASSASSIN'S CREED 2
PCZ Issue: 220 – 90%
Travel around Venice and Italy, meet Da Vinci and make friends with some prostitutes, run along walls and kill lots of people. It's Assassin's Creed, but with all of the kinks smoothed out, and plenty of depth added.



FAHRENHEIT
PCZ Issue: 159 – 90%
Murder most foul, and you're the killer. *Fahrenheit* boasts a twisting, turning, brilliantly told story, featuring multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings.



PSYCHONAUTS
PCZ Issue: 156 – 90%
Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and off its rocker – *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
PCZ Issue: 138 – 89%
We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillys is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM
PCZ Issue 213 : 89%
Proof that licensed superhero games don't have to suck, *Arkham Asylum*'s mix of action, RPG and stealth-'em-up play makes it a near classic. The best *Batman* game we've ever seen.

MMOs



WORLD OF WARCRAFT
PCZ Issue: 152 – 95%
Blizzard's recreation of Azeroth as a living virtual world doesn't disappoint. While its graphics are dated, it's beautiful to watch, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



THE LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 182 – 87%
A near-perfect recreation of Tolkien's tales, with solid combat and engaging plots, in a tasty MMO bundle. Meet Gandalf! Play as a hobbit or a spider! Middle-earth awaits...



WARHAMMER ONLINE: AGE OF RECKONING
PCZ Issue: 200 – 92%
Mythic slips *Warhammer* into their realm vs realm template. Even the most reluctant PvPer will launch themselves into huge open warfare, and drop into temporary group quests.



GUILD WARS
PCZ Issue: 156 – 94%
How to make a gaming accessible to the masses. A lot of thought has been applied, and there are no subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home, thanks to a totally skills-based setup.



EVE ONLINE
PCZ Issue: 130 – 88%
Elite Online has been a long-held fantasy for old school gamers, and this space sim has come the closest yet to making it a reality. A slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining to trading to piracy.

SIMULATION



X3: REUNION
PCZ Issue: 162 – 92%
Finally, a space sim to better *X2: The Threat*, and it just happens to be the sequel. This is possibly the best-looking game ever to appear on a PC. Oh, and it plays pretty well to boot. Why not get reunited with the X Universe?



IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES
PCZ Issue: 128 – 92%
While flight sims are getting rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None are more impressive than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



THE SIMS 3
PCZ Issue: 209 – 92%
The Sims 3 is like having your very own reality TV show in your PC, and just as addictive. Near complete freedom of gameplay lets you be a vicious diety, a benevolent dictator, or just a creepy voyeur.

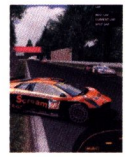


MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR X
PCZ Issue: 175 – 89%
The latest (and maybe final) in the *Flight Simulator* series is the biggest since Microsoft started using actual polygons. What's more, the visuals may just sear your eyeballs.



OPERATION FLASHPOINT: DRAGON RISING
PCZ Issue: 213 – 90%
Like its peer *ArmA II*, *OpFlash 2* aims to bring realistic warfare to your PC. But unlike its peer this game doesn't forget it's meant to be fun, not some kind of military training aid.

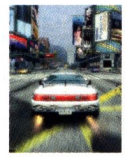
DRIVING/RACING



GTR2
PCZ Issue: 173 – 92%
Pick up this scarily realistic driving sim and race the car of your dreams. It comes with an improved driving model, new game modes and many other improvements. Guaranteed to make you feel like the Stig.



COLIN MCRAE: DIRT 2
PCZ Issue: 214 – 90%
The new rally game bearing the name of the deceased driver is a stunner. A successful mix of an arcade racer and simulator, that has most sumptuous graphics of any racer around. This sequel is going to be tough to beat.



BURNOUT PARADISE: THE ULTIMATE BOX
PCZ Issue: 205 – 89%
This game has set the standard for online arcade racers. Packs more speed than a drug dealer and more fun than slapping a bag full of Jonathan Rosses and Russell Brands.



BLUR
PCZ Issue: 223 – 90%
This is a racer of two worlds: on the one side there's the faintly serious road racer, and other the other the Mario Kart/Wacky Racers style game. This just proves, whatever a console can do, the PC can do better.



NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT
PCZ Issue: 213 – 84%
The *Need For Speed* series gets serious. Well, not too serious as the game is still weighed in the favour of fun over realism. But this is a polished release, and the best *NFS* around.

ODDBALL



SPORE
PCZ Issue: 199 – 95%
This is four charming mini-games and an excellent space strategy game, glued together with a bunch of creation kits. It's also a beautiful one-off that is so well-realised that you should experience it yourself.



WORLD OF GOO
PCZ Issue 201 – 90%
A stroke of indie genius, *World of Goo* is a puzzler in which you erect fantastic goo-based structures across a myriad of unique and intriguing levels. Novel at every turn, this indie title is simply irresistible.



PORTAL
PCZ Issue: 187 – 89%
Ingenious and absurdly funny, *Portal* is a four-hour slice of perfect puzzles and discovery. Hurling yourself through floors and walls sounds odd, but modern games are rarely more delightful.



GARRY'S MOD
PCZ Issue: 179 – 88%
The God game-like *Garry's Mod* gives you the tools to create almost anything you can think of in the Source engine, from working robots to saucy ragdoll JPEGs. Fun and easy to use, try it out and see for yourself.



BRAID
PCZ Issue: 209 – 90%
Braid is extremely pretentious, but extremely well made, with time-bending twists that'll provide a challenge to new and veteran platformers. It also has a secret editor for making your own levels.

SPORT



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2010
PCZ Issue: 214 – 88%
Every year sees another *Football Manager* appear to break up relationships across the country. But while *FM2010*'s updates mean it still holds the top spot, *Champ Man* is closing in.



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2010
PCZ Issue: 214 – 85%
The football industry may ignore *PES*, but *PES* doesn't ignore PC users. This year's *PES* includes updates from the console release, something that *FIFA 2010* can't claim.



NBA 2K10
PCZ Issue: 214 – 90%
Something of a niche product in the UK, this remains a fantastic sports game. Forcing you to use proper basketball tactics during matches that look like they're really on TV, *NBA 2K10* proves it's the top of its league.



FOOTBALL MANAGER LIVE
PCZ Issue: 205 – 85%
All the joy of *Football Manager* with added MMO fun. Build your own team from scratch and develop your manager's skills, to let you take on other managers around the world.



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2010
PCZ Issue: 214 – 80%
With a new 3D match engine, and new features like the set piece creator, *Champ Man 2010* has jumped up in quality. While it still can't match *FM2010*'s depth, it's far more accessible.

ROLE-PLAYING



THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
PCZ Issue: 167 – 95%
Oblivion's sublime graphics, intuitive character-creation and massive freeform gameplay, put paid to the myth that you have to own a beard and live with your mum to enjoy RPGs.



FALLOUT 3
PCZ Issue: 201 – 91%
While it does play like *Oblivion* in a sci-fi skin, this is a great open-world that's just as entertaining if you just wander across Washington state than if you follow the plot. And DLCs are adding to its greatness.



DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS
PCZ Issue: 214 – 93%
By delivering an RPG that's at once realistic, brutal, heroic, sexy and immersive, BioWare have secured their position as masters of the RPG genre. We're already eager to see what they'll do with *Dragon Age 2*.



MASS EFFECT 2
PCZ Issue: 218 – 93%
Darker in tone than the original, but featuring refined... well... everything, *Mass Effect 2* is a near-perfect mix of third-person gunplay and RPG storytelling. Just make sure you play *Mass Effect* first.



DEUS EX
PCZ Issue: 93 – 94%
This is the benchmark in RPGs – if not gaming. A twisting plot, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama ensure *Deus Ex* remains the alpha male of the PC gaming world.

LOG'S PICK



BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM
PCZ Issue 213 – 89%
I'm saying *Arkham Asylum* because I didn't want to say *World of Goo*. I love *World of Goo*, and I want 2D Boy to become ultra-billionaires riding around on diamond-eyed dragons, but I also feel I should acknowledge that it's 2010 now, and withdraw my Goo-gushing until they make a new game.

So, *Arkham Asylum*: the game I first played about 18 months ago when a surprisingly complete preview copy fell into my hands. The game I played completely through, unable to write about half of it, because of the NDA that came with it. Still, it was a privileged feeling – it's not often you finish a game for a preview – and it actually felt slightly naughty, like I was getting more than I deserved.

But it was well-judged for Rocksteady. By the time I got to do my interviews and write the preview, I was already 100% sold on their treatment of the caped bastard, and was desperate to write the actual review.

Well, that never happened – I never ended up reviewing *Arkham Asylum* for anyone. So those hours spent in the house, desperately telling an uninterested housemate that I was Batman, and he had to come and look, because I was being Batman on the telly, can remain a pure memory for me. Batman... I never had to give you a score. This love transcends percentages. Give us a cuddle.

DAVID'S PICK



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2010
PCZ Issue 214 – 88%
While doubters would decry it as being merely a spreadsheet or, if they're being kind, an "animated spreadsheet", they're clearing missing the point of why these games are so compelling to play. If you think of it being like an RPG then perhaps you'll come closer to understanding it. And if you factor in the fact your imagination has a lot to do with why you can enjoy something that, yes, does look like a swishier version of *Excel*. It's the emotional bond you form with your mental image of the players in your team that connects you to the game.

Like a good book, *FM2010* goes beyond the mere dry presentation of facts and figures. Overanalyse the game and you miss the point, just like trying to interpret or explain why a classic book is saying what it says drains all the life from it. You might also want to think of it as a strategy game too, where your efforts are put into defeating an opponent using the information you have to hand.

Essentially, you've got the most comprehensive football database in the world, licensed by Premiership teams, coupled with an increasingly lush visual aspect that belies its spreadsheet origins. Yes, you're just watching a load of stick men running around on the screen, but if you break any game down to that level, they become absurd. It's a great game and there's reason why so many love it.

ON THE DVD PCZONE

On the DVD is a special historical document: the *PC ZONE Review Index*. This is a record of every game we've reviewed since issue #1. Keep it safe – it'll be priceless some day!

PCZONE

A LETTER TO THE PC GAMING INDUSTRY

Dear everyone,

The Poseidon Adventure movie first came out in 1972. Set in a capsized cruise liner, it was the first movie to show what life would really be like in a world where the toilets were on the ceiling. Like so many other things, it suffered the traditional modern indignity of having its guts ripped out and heavy make-up put on the skinbag, but one image will suffer no remake, Shelley Winters, fat and coronary, unable to go on. She's the last one to die before they make it to the rescue helicopters.

Is the capsized ocean liner PC gaming? Are we the lovely, obese Shelley Winters? Are those brave escapees the magazines who bothered to update their blogs, and the indie developers who've made it onto the life-rafts of XBLA?

Of course not. Shelley Winters may have been large, but she wasn't comprised of several employees who – at the moment of death – detached themselves from her corpse, and attempted to get other jobs. Similarly, the PC's lack of a framework of censorship will always make it the vital playground for independent games. PC gaming isn't dying, that's just something people say every now and then when they don't think anyone's looking at them. We're as bad as everyone else, we put "how to save PC gaming" on the bag.

Publishers: if you're going to use focus groups try not to weight the results in favour of your own prejudices. We've read that book, we know you're a corporation and that you're legally bound to put profit above human concerns. But sometimes it makes good business sense to not to openly act like a bunch of sociopathic, anti-creative bastards. It also makes business sense not to alienate the developers of your most profitable franchise until they join a competitor (but at least that's hilarious to watch).

We hope you find a solution with the DRM, too. We PC gamers are an entitled set of bastards, and some of us have managed to convince ourselves that piracy is doing you a twisted favour. With DRM-free indie developers like Amanita and 2D Boy report reporting 90% levels of piracy, we don't have a solution. But when Ubisoft get the results of their daring experiment in consumer abuse, we hope it's a kick in the cash tits.

Developers: there was never anything personal. Except that time when we gave *Roma Victor* 8%. That got personal on your part, didn't it? And that time the EA decided we couldn't have *The Sims Stuff Packs* because we were damaging the Metacritic scores, so we went out and bought them to review anyway. That was certainly personal on our parts. But we never hated you. Just those fucking expansion packs.

Indie developers: God, you're lovely. Talking to you was always a pleasure. In a world of embargoes, big-budget advertising campaigns spanning years, and agonisingly metered information (fuck you, *The Old Republic*, we didn't buy that "We don't talk about things that aren't finished yet" for a second), it was a pleasure to talk to another person simply about their game.

Nigel, in IT: Keep doing what you're doing. You were the wind beneath our wings. To the people in advertising on the fourth floor, it was truly nauseating overhearing your conversations in the toilets at the Christmas parties. May you spend the rest of your life having a conversation with a machine that simply repeats what you said two seconds ago. It'd take you out of circulation, and we think it'd make you happy, too.

And to the beautiful people working in PR: Go on, buy us a drink. We're thirsty and unemployed. And vote for us in the Games Media Awards. Because, you know. It'd be funny if we won the Best Magazine, wouldn't it? Only a little bit heartbreaking, but really bloody funny.

Yours honestly,

PC ZONE

tat ZonE

Tat's all, folks!

WILL PORTER LEFT *PC ZONE* a while ago, taking our eBay password with him and laughing that all those kiddies charities could "swivel on a fat one". But as evil as he is, Porter can't stop us from looking vaguely around the office and bundling all the crappy promotional merchandise into a box, and sending it to a worthwhile charity.

Don't expect anything posh, the days of extravagantly corrupt gifts filtering down to the mere magazine staff are long gone. But if you're lucky, you might get one of those *World in Conflict* tops, or anything else we didn't end up eating, drinking or wearing simply to survive the long winters. So, visit our worthy comrades at GamesAid (ebay.co.uk/gamesaid), who've agreed to receive, photograph, and take direct payment for, everything we've scraped together. It's not the shabbiest parade of tat we've ever bundled onto you, the luckless reader, by far, so visit their website gamesaid.org immediately to get the facts on the auction. This might be your last chance to own any of the tat that gets spat out of the gaming industry's promotional machine!

Will you bid on the weird winged guy, who may or may not have bits missing? Maybe the *World of Warcraft* miniatures game Starter Set containing several choking hazards for toddlers? We've also got a massive landscape posters that are impossible to photograph, but are large and tasteless enough to humiliate a sex offender.

So if you want some of these gifts, keep an eye on gamesaid.org. All this tat, and more, will be on sale about the time you're reading this text here. PCZ

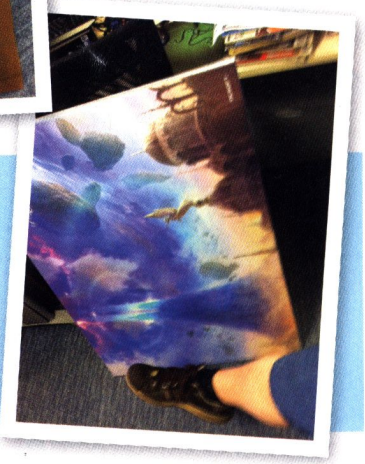
THE TATZONE CHARITY

All proceeds from the final TatZone auction will be donated to GamesAid (gamesaid.org). GamesAid is a new games industry charity that aims to raise funds for UK-based children's charities for education, health, housing and social welfare.



STREET FIGHTER

Create the impression that you are Dhalsim, Guile, or the lesser known character Ted Chuff with these surprisingly wearable T-shirts. Offering an unusually discreet logo, we'd have snaffed them ourselves, if they'd sent them in fat.



AION

This beautiful image of the world of *Aion* is just the thing for a reader whose sense of artistic appreciation is limited to the cyan and lilac parts of the spectrum. It can also cover a large area that you haven't bothered painting.



INTROVERSION

Another surprisingly desirable bit of indie developer kudos here, a tin box containing *Multiwinia*, a bit of art, and a couple of those adorable flat bastards who don't tessellate as well as it feels they should. Actually, you should probably be buying this from Introversion.



WARCRAFT

If you're going to choose the unpopular race, you might as well choose the popular class. We've got two undead priests knocking about the office, we'll be selling the one that's been left in its packaging. You can be sure your purchase won't have been embraced by David.

WIN A BOX OF MYSTERY TAT!

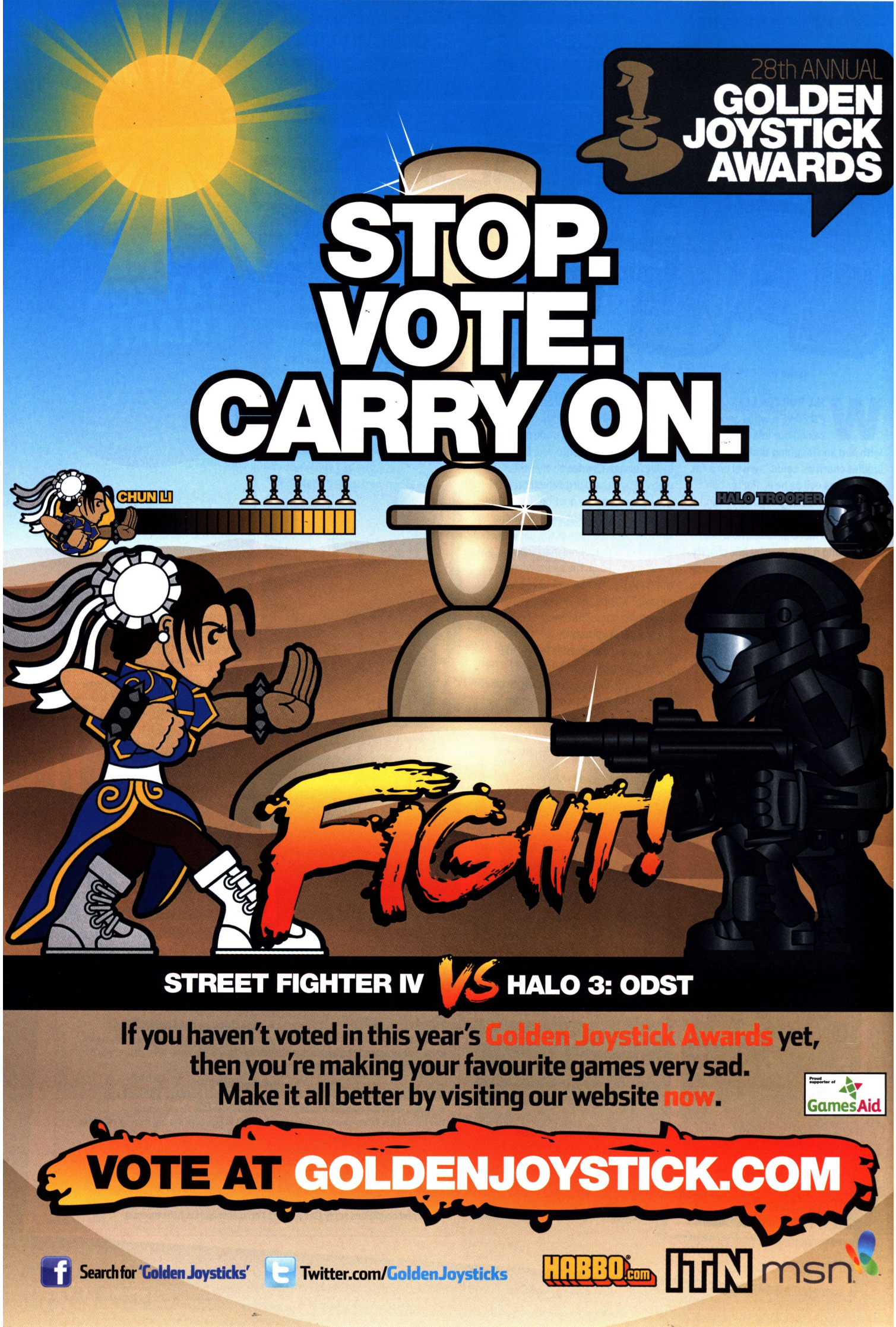
Do not look up – you won't like what you see

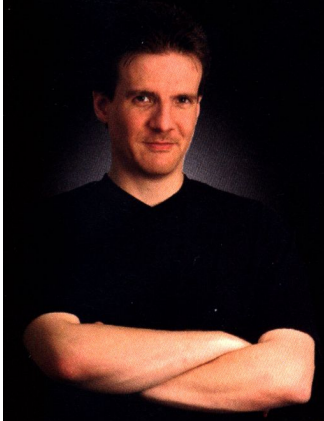
There is some stuff that is too special, and too cheap, to be auctioned off. As a special thank you we're giving it away to a lucky reader. There are special, weird, loose, valuable, and random things stuffed inside. As for what they all are, you'll have to enter the competition to find out!

TO WIN THE BIG BOX OF TAT ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS:

1. Name the last game to receive a *PC ZONE* Classic Award, and
2. Finish this tiebreaker in 10 words or less: I deserve a big box of random gaming shit because...

To enter and get a chance to win the BIG BOX OF TAT email your answer, the completed tiebreaker, and a delivery address to letters@pczone.co.uk. You must include BOX OF TAT COMPO in the subject line, or your entry won't be counted! Entries must be received before midnight on the 28 September 2010. The usual terms and conditions apply (see page 113 or visit snipurl.com/futuretcs).


28th ANNUAL
GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS
STOP. VOTE. CARRY ON.
CHUN LI
HALO TROOPER
FIGHT!
STREET FIGHTER IV VS HALO 3: ODST
If you haven't voted in this year's Golden Joystick Awards yet, then you're making your favourite games very sad. Make it all better by visiting our website now.
Proud supporter of GamesAid
VOTE AT GOLDENJOYSTICK.COM
Search for 'Golden Joysticks'
Twitter.com/GoldenJoysticks
HABBO.com
ITN
msn



PCZONE Hardware

What the future holds?

NEWS FROM THE FUTURE

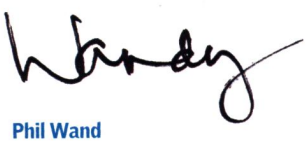
IN WRITING THIS final issue, I spent many happy hours thumbing my way through all the previous *PC ZONE*s. And while I found myself chuckling at how the things we now take for granted were once pie in the sky – USB, SATA, DDR3, broadband, not having to reinstall *Windows* every fortnight – I'd forgotten how expensive everything was.

Building a PC with Intel's 486DX2/66, 512MB DRAM, an Orchid Fahrenheit card, 80MB HDD and a SoundBlaster, hooked up to a ghastly 17in CRT monitor and you'd have had to murder your parents before you could afford it.

But such hardware only appears bad value because it doesn't have the power to run your mobile phone. Even the first Pentium looks stunted, its three million transistor count dwarfed by the three billion in a GTX 480. And today's car boot sale PC has more integrated circuits than the West has people.

What next then? To which the answer is, how should I bloody well know? I'm the guy who was thrilled by the first 28.8K modem, left speechless by the 3dfx Voodoo2, and dumbfounded by TFT screens with 25ms response times. I couldn't imagine why anyone sane would want to listen to me.

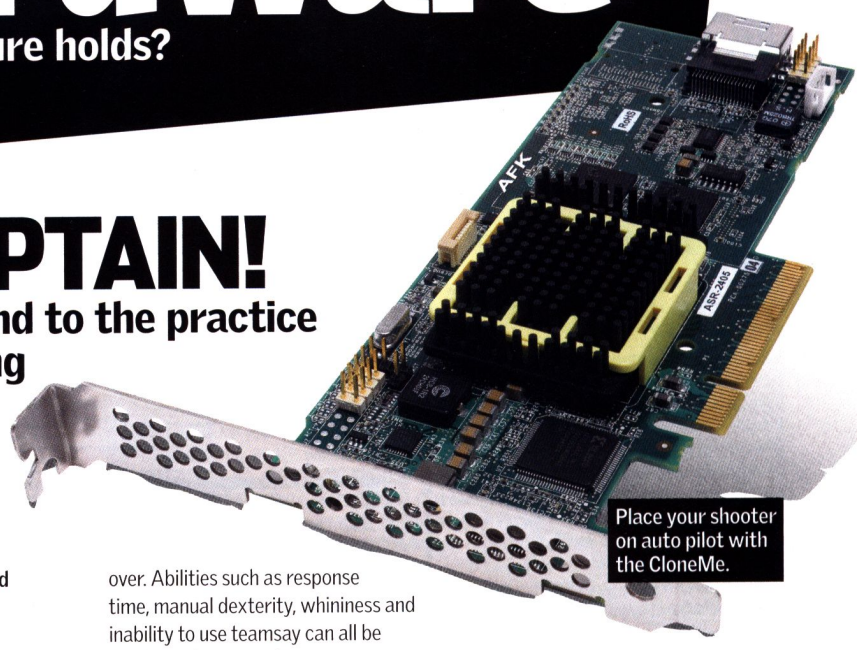
But you have, and I've enjoyed pretending my opinion matters. See you around.



Phil Wand
Hardware editor

AI, CAPTAIN!

A promised end to the practice of poopsocking



Place your shooter on auto pilot with the CloneMe.

HAVING LAUNCHED THEIR hugely popular BitTorrent triple port network card last year, AFK Technologies have announced a new add-in board for busy gamers, the Super CloneMe Ultra.

Designed to take over from you whenever your mum calls you to dinner or your sock needs emptying, the Super CloneMe Ultra features a liquid-cooled Core i8 550 processor running the BotProd artificial intelligence library preconfigured with twitch shooter, console spam and ragequit modules.

When you leave your PC but wish to continue playing in your own absence, the Super CloneMe Ultra instantly takes over. Abilities such as response time, manual dexterity, whininess and inability to use teamsay can all be configured separately.

The industry standard BotProd library allows you to not only engage with enemy players but also respond to insults with defamatory remarks that can be set to auto escalate. Super CloneMe Ultra will then visit the *Steam* profile of the player in question and extrapolate their sexual preference while simultaneously attempting to bruteforce their password.

Additional modules, such as the hilarious one that plays really bad Dutch trance over voice comms, are available as €19.99 downloads from the AFK app store.

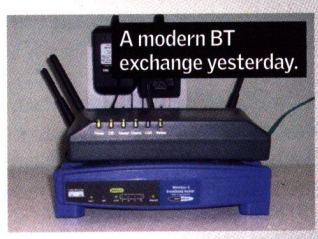
The Super CloneMe Ultra is compatible with *Team Fortress 4*, *Call of Duty: Console Twatrush 9* and *Duke Nukem Forever*.

afktech.com/cloneme

BROADER BROADBAND

Fast connections promised... again

TO ADDRESS CRITICISM that UK broadband speeds are lower than in Europe, BT have announced plans to increase the data rate of their flagship 0.5TB broadband product.



A modern BT exchange yesterday.

The average British home should now be able to connect at 512KB, assuming they live within 200 yards of their exchange and have a surname ending in the letter J. This upped data rate should mean the ability to download simple *Flash* games in under 10 minutes or more.

Alan Thoroughcrap, Head of Mediocrity at BT and the man charged with extending the company's inability to create worthwhile products was unavailable for comment due to being in a marketing meeting discussing the background colour of websites.

bt.com

NEWS ROUND-UP

THE HAND OF GAMING
Famous gamer with a misspelled Jonathan, Johnathan "Wendy" Wendell has lent his Fatal1ty brand to a glove that relieves carpal tunnel syndrome. Available for €19.99 plus 40% VAT, the Rqtkl1y Vumpyter Hlob keeps your circulation flowing and wrists straight. Mr Wendell was available for comment but wasn't able to type it.
fatal1ty.com

CLEANING UP
Logitech have released a three-handed mouse that vacuums your desk after you've finished using it. The device costs £249 and features a 23,500dpi optical engine and throbbing blue light that appeals to consumerist idiots. It is also fitted with internal suspension to prevent damage from being slammed repeatedly on desks in fits of geek rage.
logitech.co.uk

WARNING: THIS MONTH'S HARD WORDS

BY RICHARD COSGROVE

"GOING FREELANCE": A euphemism used by journalists after losing their job rather than admit to people that they're unemployed. **BT:** The trendy name of the venerable telecom monopoly British Telecom. Also rumoured to stand for "Bloody Terrible", "Botched Telephony" and "Bad Telephones". **PHIL WAND:** PC and IT hardware expert, and one of the longest serving members of the *PC ZONE* team. **DEARWANDY.COM:** The place to go from now on if you want advice on buying or repairing PC hardware problems. Don't bother with magazines like [redacted] and [redacted] – their advice has never been a patch on ours. (See what I did there? "Patch" *sigh* OK then, bye.)

Dear Wandy

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...

PROBLEMS?
Mistook your wardrobe for the toilet again? Local shop stopped stocking your favourite blue-flavoured Pringles? Been playing *World of Warcraft* so long your partner's left you? Wandy can't help with those setbacks, but we can solve all your hardware hassles. Wandy knows all, and he would have helped you if you'd emailed him at: wandy@dearwandy.com, but now it's too late. This was your last chance.

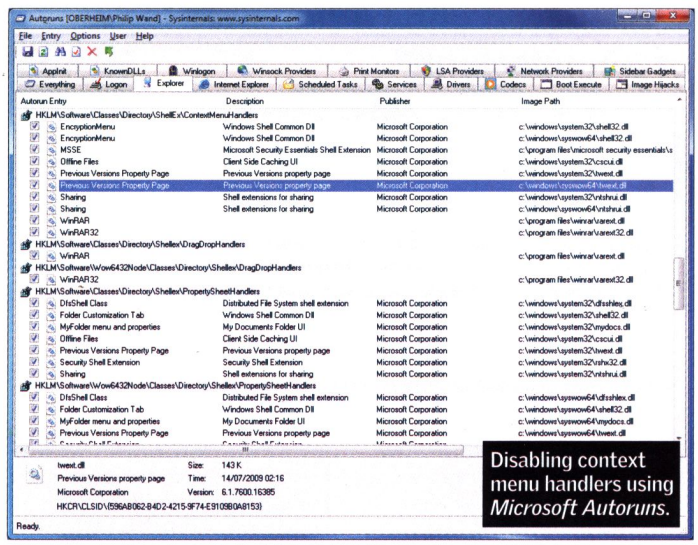
Q RIGHT HOOK

I have an incredibly annoying and incredibly unsolvable problem on my *Windows 7* laptop, where each time I right-click on something inside an Explorer window or at the desktop an error appears and nothing more.

I've read things about menu hooks and handlers but am no wiser for it.
Lorraine Reid

A *You can solve this problem by downloading* Autoruns for Windows *from Microsoft at bit.ly/autorunsforwin. Run the program and select the Explorer tab. Scroll down the list for ContextMenuHandlers and uncheck everything. Click the save icon on the toolbar and you should find your problem has disappeared.*

What you now need to do is add those unchecked items back individually, saving and testing after each one until you find the one that's broken. Once located, uninstall or reinstall the program associated with. In the event it's something you don't recognise Google for it and download Microsoft Security Essentials *because your laptop has clearly caught something nasty from its travels on the internet.*



Disabling context menu handlers using *Microsoft Autoruns.*

"The truth is that gold can't provide the best electrical connection – copper and silver are both superior"

Q FOOL'S GOLD

My brother will only buy cables and PC devices that come with gold-plated USB connectors, claiming, in the case of his Razer mouse, that they improve the device's accuracy, and, in the case of cables, that they are less prone to interference from outside signals. Is he wasting his money?
Andrew G

A *This question is hard to answer without knowing how much money he's actually spending, and whether he's deliberately avoiding products that don't contain precious metal.*

By way of an example, the last HDMI cable I bought from Ebuyer was "gold-plated" but was under a fiver and as such the gold happened to be there. It's a similar story with gaming peripherals, because it's not like someone looking to buy a Razer mouse gets to choose the finish of its USB connector.

However, there's indeed a lot of ignorance surrounding the purpose of gold when used in such products. The truth is that gold can't provide the best electrical connection – copper or silver are both superior – but as a noble metal it's useful in adverse conditions and where the environment has a high moisture content. It's used on home products principally because it looks good.

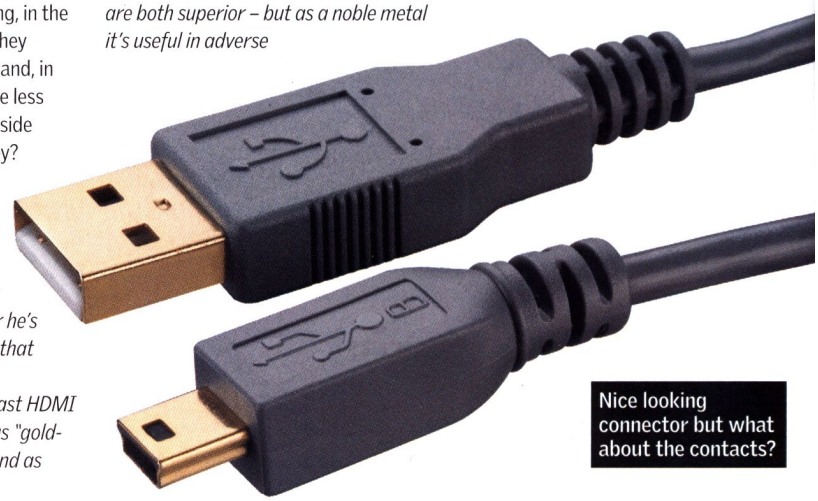
For a reality check, peer at the back of any mainstream motherboard. The ports into which USB cables are pushed typically have nickel or steel outer shells, and copper alloy insides. Even if you were to deliberately select gold plated connectors for their resistance to corrosion, the fact they are pushed into steel sockets renders any corrosion-resistant property pointless.

This is like audiophiles who spend £150 on a power cable to feed their £1,000 amplifier forgetting that the £3.29 13A double socket on their wall is supplied by a length of old mains cable (£48.75 for a 100m drum) put there when the house was built.

When choosing a USB cable yourself, bear in mind that the data it carries is digital. While you might legitimately use high-quality components when hooking up analogue devices such a high-end microphone, a USB wire is essentially a medium for carrying packets of 0 bits and 1 bits. If it's good enough to do that, it's as good as anyone needs.

Q MEDIA CENTRAL

Having recently bought a hi-def TV for the lounge, I want to make better use of it by connecting a PC to it. Thing is, I do and don't know where


Nice looking connector but what about the contacts?

DRIVER WATCH

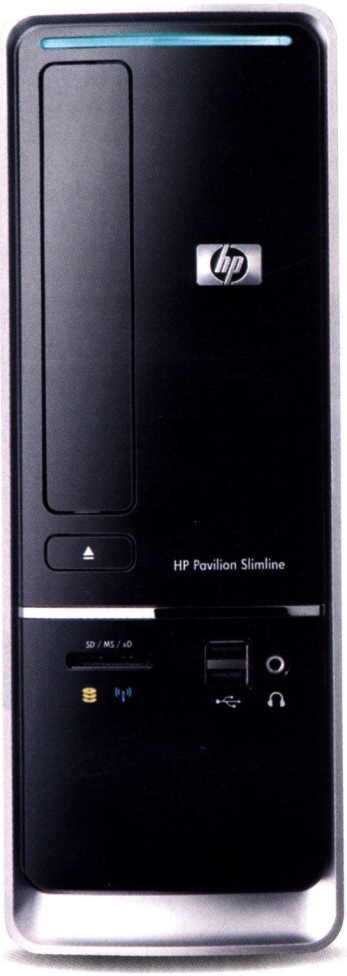
GRAPHICS

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 10.6	16 Jun 10
NVIDIA	GeForce/ION Driver 258.96	19 Jul 10

SOUND

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
Creative	X-Fi Beta 2.18.0004	30 Jul 08
Creative	Creative Alchemy 1.20.04	01 Aug 08
Creative	Audigy Beta 2.18.0001	17 Jul 08

"There's little point creating a niche product when almost any PC these days is up to the job"



The HP Pavilion Slimline can make a fine home theatre PC.

to start. I've tried looking for ready-built *Media Center* PCs online but there are surprisingly few to be had.

None of the big names seem to make them and those that I could find are either massively underpowered (ie have an Atom processor, which isn't going to be any good for gaming) or are hellishly overpriced for what they are.

While I've built PCs for myself in the past and haven't blown myself to smithereens, and so don't mind being given a shopping list of components, I'd prefer to get something off the shelf saving me the time and the effort of putting it together, and in addition giving me someone I can call in the event the wife breaks it. Any thoughts?

Charlie Watkins

A *I'm not certain why there are so few* Media Center *products on the market when five years ago there were half a dozen to choose from, but I have an inkling. I think it's a mix of support headaches – home theatre PCs flick between 'on' and 'standby' their entire lives, yet* Windows *has never been fully reliable transitioning between the two – and the fact anyone buying a quiet and powerful* Windows 7*-based machine will likely have* Windows Media Center *integrated with it. Basically, there's little point creating a niche product when almost any PC these days is up to the job.*

Let's look at what I did. For the machine in my lounge I took Intel's DG43GT motherboard (£74), a used Core 2 Q8400 from eBay (£75), a Corsair 400W CX power supply (£35), 4GB RAM (£70) and added a 1TB drive (£49), and the cheapest Blu-ray drive available (about £50). Windows 7 Home Premium *is around £95 and the case in which to put it all ranges from £35 upwards. The chassis I used was Antec's Micro Fusion (£60) which is dreadful, so is to be avoided. So far we've totted up less than £500 on what is a rather rocking small machine.*

If you're wanting to buy retail, look for a machine with a HDMI out and go for a slim-line SFF case if space is at a premium. Avoid ultra-compact machines like Dell's Inspiron Zino as you won't have the add-in expansion you need. Something like an HP Pavilion Slimline would be ideal – just make sure it has more sockets space than just a VGA out.

As for add-in cards, no need for graphics on the DG43GT as it comes with HDMI out and connects directly to TVs – set your desktop resolution at the native resolution of your set and you're done. However, you will need to add one or more tuner cards in order to use the machine as a PVR (receive and record digital TV programmes).

In mine I use a combination of Hauppauge's PCI-based WinTV-NOVA-TD 500 and a Compro PCIe-based Vista E700, both dual-tuner cards. This gives me four tuners in total and so I can watch one channel while recording up to three others.

Given the way decent TV is funnelled into one or two nights in the week, and the fact you should allow one tuner per member of your household, four isn't the overkill you might at first think.

ALL ABOUT...

31 PHILIPS AMBX PERIPHERALS

Take coloured lights, a pair of fans, 2.1 speakers and something that vibrates your wrist a bit. Ready for your senses to be surrounded and your games transformed?

Thought not. Philips would have you believe that when combined, some coloured lights, air blasts and a rumbling sensation would create a breakthrough entertainment experience. The reality is that anything that seems more than a bit unconvincing when you read it is almost certain to be a rubbish when you try it. And so it proved with amBX, a highly laudable, but at the same time rather silly, attempt to create what the company's marketing guys termed a "more immersive PC gaming experience".

The speakers were actually very good, albeit just three- rather than six- or eight-channels, but the coloured lights were only effective in a dark room and like the fans only made sense when you were playing one of the very limited number of amBX compliant games.

Chuck in a retail price of £200 and it's no surprise that it never caught on.



Well, the speakers weren't bad.

Q **MEDIA CENTRAL**

I've seen 2TB HDDs advertised for under £90 but these spin slower than the 7,200rpm drives I'm used to. Are they slower in everyday use?

R2Dman

A *Samsung's, Seagate's and Western Digital's £90 2TB drives are aimed at users who value storage over speed. If you want a large drive get Western's Caviar Black.* PCZ

FORUMS: DIRECT FROM DEARWANDY.COM

(Crax) My Samsung hard drive has started to rattle loudly. No faults or errors or other problems are evident and all seems to be working entirely normally, but I understand that noises of this sort are a prelude to complete failure. How do I transfer my OS and data from the old to the new drive? (tom_hargreaves) Do you have the *Vista* installation disks? You'd be better backing up your game saves, music, pictures etc and then doing a fresh install of *Vista* onto a new hard drive. (Tetras) You could create a host of the old drive onto the new drive (keeping the install intact) but you would need specific software for doing this. (Wandy) I suggest using *Acronis True Image* (acronis.co.uk) for this task.

Then and now

Phil Wand shows us what was hot in 1993 and now in 2010

THOSE OF YOU who plucked our first issue from the shelves of Menzies will recognise the components listed here in this tribute to the hardware that's pleasured us over *PC ZONE*'s years.

Back then, we were happy with our cheap 486SX/25 clone, 512K Trident videocard and tower case in special needs beige with matching keyboard and mouse – a shoe-like device you had to open up and blow the biscuits out of every 17 minutes.

We could think of no possible reason why we'd need more than 1MB free space on our 40MB hard drive, particularly when a blockbusters like *Doom* still came on floppy disks. Who knew what 3D 'hardware accelerator' cards would do for gaming; that CDs – those newcomers to the music scene – would eventually lead to the extinction of floppies; how the Internet would change absolutely everything; and that Menzies was actually pronounced 'mingers'?

THAT WAS THEN

GRAPHICS CARD

ORCHID FAHRENHEIT

PRICE £200



3D CARDS AREN'T on the market so no games take advantage of them. Famous names in 2D hardware include S3, Paradise, Hercules, Cirrus Logic and Tseng Labs, the Tseng ET4000 with VESA local bus known for making your system feel not quite as retarded everything else. Persons lucky enough to own a Diamond Stealth or Orchid Fahrenheit 'accelerator' with its 1MB RAM and support for 32,768 colours at 640x480 have friends and neighbours misting up their French windows in the hope of getting a glimpse.

THIS IS TODAY

GRAPHICS CARD

CASTROL GTX 480

PRICE £400



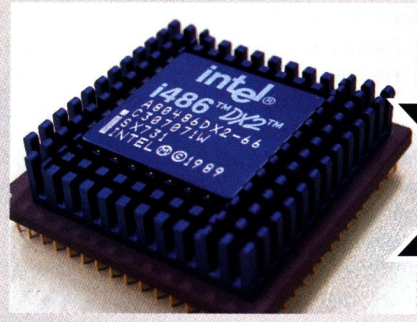
GPUs NOW BOAST more than 4 billion transistors making them twice as complicated as Battletoads on the NES. Devs rely on the power of modern hardware to render awful game concepts in high dynamic range, complete with anti-aliasing and quadriplegic dribbling, thus scraping a 6/10 on Eurogamer. Hardware review websites run by teenagers thrilled to receive anything free give a minimum 75% rating to any videocard whose box features a muscular, large-breasted woman.

THEN

PROCESSOR

INTEL 486DX2/66

PRICE £400



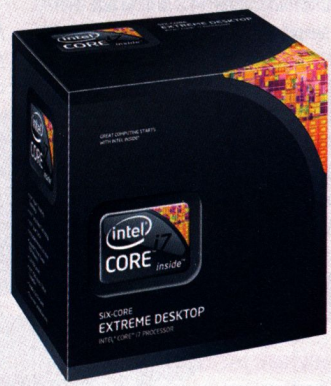
MOST PCs COME with Intel's omnipresent 80486 processor or a cheap clone made by Texas Instruments, Cyrix, IBM or AMD. Although there are only a handful of flavours on sale, ranging from the 486SX/25 to the 486DX2/66 (the DX2 variants supplied with a mysterious substance called 'clock multiplier'), to have any choice at all makes the upgrade from the now obsolete 80386 feel even more indulgent. This year also sees the launch of the Pentium, the price of which makes any Pentium-based machine at least £3,000.

TODAY

GRAPHICS CARD

INTEL CORE I7 EXTRA REAM EDITION

PRICE £850



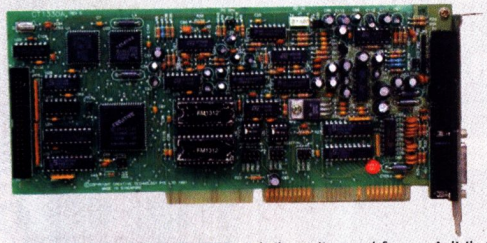
SIX HYPER-THREADING cores, 12 processing threads, a QPI point-to-point link capable of up to 6.4 GigaTransfers per second, 12MB L3 cache and integrated memory controller, and all on a 32nm process chip means you can impress people safe in the knowledge they don't know what you're talking about either. The Extra Ream's unlocked multiplier allows further boasting, even though owners have no intention of using it because if they had a genuine desire to gain satisfaction from overclocking they'd have bought a different chip.

THEN

SOUND CARD

CREATIVE LABS SOUND BLASTER PRO DELUXE

PRICE £165



ANYONE TOSSING THEIR AdLib audio card for an AdLib Gold gets home to find that AdLib filed for bankruptcy. This leaves products from Creative Labs as the only mainstream choice, the menu option for 'Sound Blaster' in id Software's *Doom* setup cementing its position. Poseurs buy the Gravis Ultrasound instead, allegedly superior because it uses wavetable synthesis and samples, but to make your games work you must smash it to pieces with a keyboard while shouting.

TODAY

SOUND CARD

CREATIVE LABS SOUND BLASTER PRO DELUXE PRICEY HOT LIQUID ORGASM FAMILIARITY EDITION

PRICE £73,109.49

THESE DAYS YOU don't need a bloody sound card. Just use the one that's fitted to your motherboard.

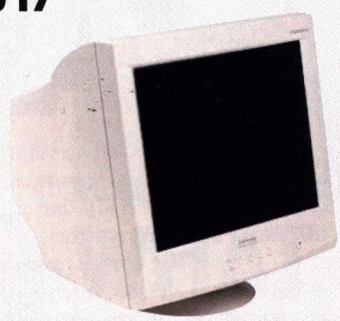


THEN

SCREEN

MITSUBISHI DIAMOND PRO 17

PRICE £1,050



THE SIGHT OF ANY monitor larger than 15 inches invokes spontaneous dry humping, but CRTs such as the NEC MultiSync and Mitsubishi Diamond Pro are the ultimate in gamer cred. Not only do they boast four digit prices, they also make everything else in your bedroom look tiny. Features include an unnerving buzzing noise when you switch on, the sound a familiar prelude to late night gaming sessions. Rated at 70W and with radiator fins stretching back a third of a metre, they also make fine companions in winter.

TODAY

SCREEN

HP ZR24W

PRICE £300



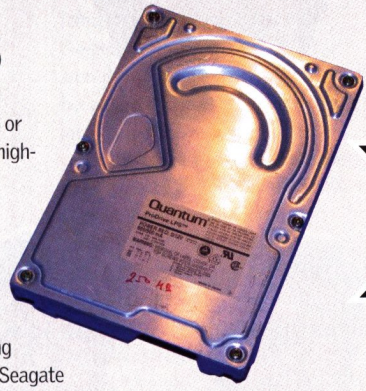
HEY, WANT TO spend an entire afternoon scouring the internet for the nastiest, cheapest monitor you can find? One that wobbles when you're typing, has speakers that make all your games sound arse and only comes with a 15-pin VGA connector? Sure you do! But if you're not a time-wasting penny pincher, go and buy HP's near perfect ZR24W screen and keep it for 10 years, during which time you will never once regret spending that teensy bit extra on a quality IPS-based product that's been properly engineered.

THEN

HDD

QUANTUM PRODRIVE LPS

PRICE £220



MOST GAMERS HAVE an 80MB or 120MB IDE drive, chiefly because high-capacity units don't leave much change from a half-year of mortgage payments. Utilities such as *DoubleSpace* and *Stacker* use on-the-fly compression to help everyone get more out of small drives while simultaneously trashing all your stuff at random moments. Seagate begin offering a five-year warranty but disk failure remains part of PC ownership. Micropolis, Conner and Quantum are respected names with significant market share, yet none will see 2010.

TODAY

HDD

CRUCIAL REALSSD C300 128GB

PRICE £225



I'VE OFTEN SAID that I can't say it enough, and this time I won't be saying it again. So pay attention: an SSD is right now the single best thing you can buy for your PC. Stick with new models and, if you have the money, steer clear of smaller drives as they aren't as impressively fast. The 128GB variant of Crucial's RealSSD is one of the finest drives available today. Pair it with an 2TB mechanical drive such as WD's £100 Caviar and even the heaviest masturbator among you will have all the internal storage you need.

FREE! COLLECTIBLE HEAD



Shit review? Need to stop screaming? This is the head for you.



When the review says, "Omg!" and your mind says, "Fuck". Stick Steve on it.



The irony is that this is actually Steve's 'O-Face'.

HILL'S HEADS

FOR YEARS, PC ZONE has been boldly holding up the standard of decency, family values and all that other moralistic crap that politicians like to spout.

Our fight against the forces of nudity, the human body and naughty bits appended thereupon has led us into many strange and bewildering places, but we have always carried our shield, the image of the one who will protect us from the smut. Our faithful protector is the 'Steve Hill Face', the coverer-up of the obscene, the obscurer of the flesh, the redactor of the carnal.

Wherever he has gone, lewdness has been vanquished. But now we are no more and you must fend for yourself in this cruel time. The advocates of the flesh are legion and must not be allowed to succeed in their quest to corrupt the minds of the impressionable.

For this reason, we pass on our shield to you, the reader. We can no longer protect you from evil, but Hill's Face is yours forever. Use it wisely, child.



We've sent a lifetime's supply to Steve's chum Courtney Love.



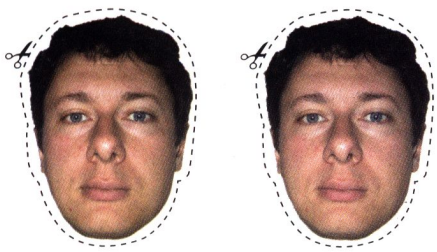
This could be what a vagina actually looks like. We don't know.



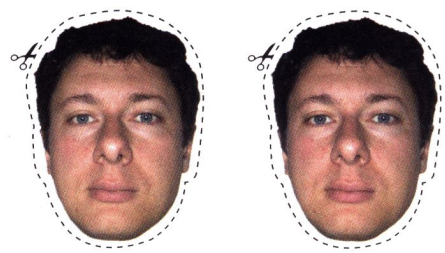
The last thing you'll see before you're smothered with a pillow.



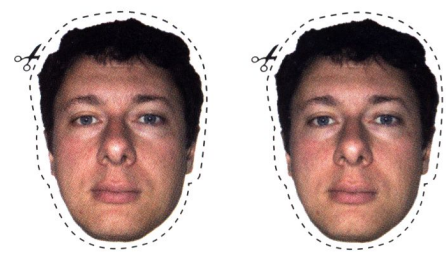
This one's subtly different, can you spot where?



Multiplying like the fatal STD you catch if you see the smut beneath.



Christ, putting all these captions in seemed like a good idea at the time.



Do us a favour and stick these all over the copies of other mags.



PCZONE Freeplay

Mods, maps and free things!

CHEAP SEATS

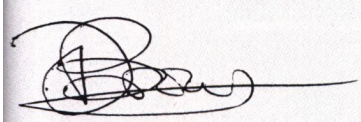
FOR YEARS, THIS section has been providing you with the best free stuff in game land, but now it's come to and end and it falls to me to sign off on one final Freeplay. I do so with a measure of pride, as I can talk about Nick Brakespear's *Left 4 Dead* campaign.

Many have said that a level design feature would be good to do in this section, but as Nick will wearily testify, doing this takes an absolute age. It's great he managed to get the campaign finished and ready for you all in time, the results you can explore for yourself on the cover disc. Maybe it'll even bring a little tear to your eye when your flesh is being torn from your bones by an Official *PC ZONE* Hunter.

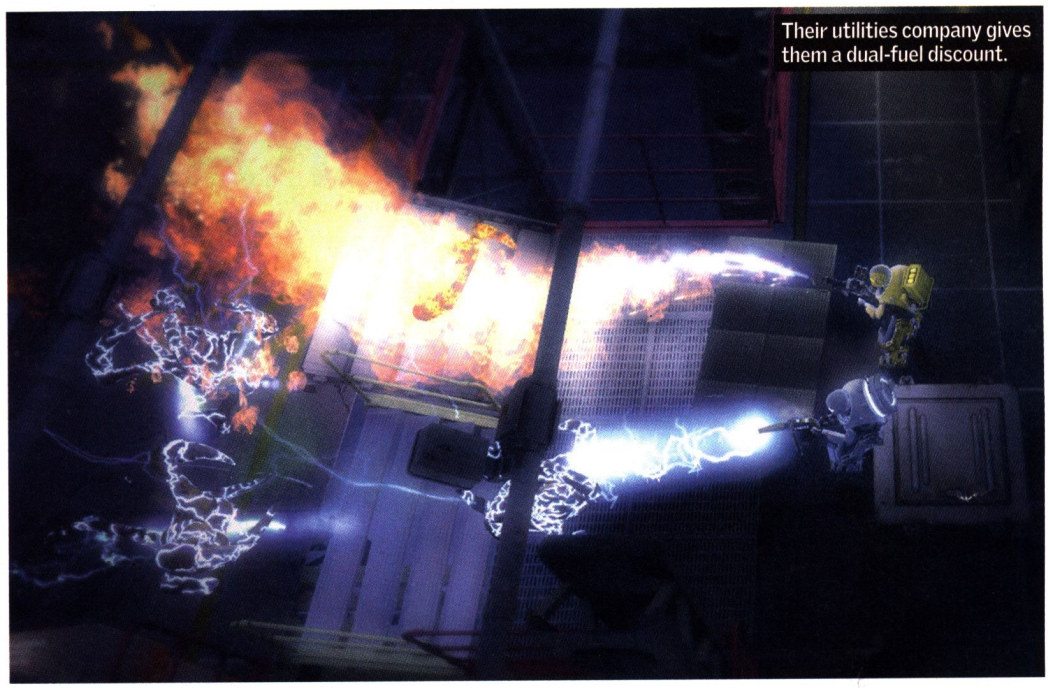
But sadly, our time has come. You can feast your eyes on a load of *Warhammer 40,000* mods in Extend and your eyeballs might just explode with delight as you gaze at the wondrous collection of free games that Log has spent hours scouring the net to find. They might not be as good as *Hat Game*, but they're a start.

As for me, I'm going to have to dust off the wallet and begin paying for stuff again. It's been a long time. Do game shops still take farthings? Is Future Zone still about? Whatever their equivalent is, I'm sure their shelves are packed full of PC games and not just drowning under a hundredweight of crappy DS titles.

Anyway, I'm off into the ether. Perhaps you'll see me somewhere, sometime, and think "I wasted an entire afternoon playing that game where the shark eats the planes, all because of him." Adios, muchachos!



David Brown
Staff writer



Their utilities company gives them a dual-fuel discount.

WHAT A RUSH

Valve infests our hearts with free xenomorphs

WEBSITE alienswarm.com

THEY WERE SUBJECT to a lot of abuse when *Left 4 Dead 2* was announced, culminating in vast boycotts and hatred flying their way across the ether, but Valve have responded to the bile with a salvo of loveliness, a gaming bouquet of flowers thrust into our surprised and grateful hands. Blushing, we accept *Alien Swarm* into our hearts and all the troubles seem like they never existed because it's free and, it seems, like it'll just keep on giving.

At its most basic, *Alien Swarm* is *Alien Breed*, a semi-top-down action blaster where you and three allies attempt to complete objectives as swarms of xenomorphs frantically try to crush your heads. It's very much a top-down *Left 4 Dead*, in fact, right down to the menu system.

But it's more complicated than just a simple blasting experience though. There a number of classes to choose from, each of them vital in different ways. The Medic heals but he's the only chap who can remove facehuggers who jump on you. The Tech is probably the most of vital of all the classes though, as objectives can't be completed without him. There's even an achievement for keeping the Tech character alive through a level.

As of the time of writing, there's only one official campaign, but the modding community has taken to *Alien Swarm* with remarkable speed. Already there's a *Warhammer 40,000* mod in production (bit.ly/omnibusmod) and people have been discovering hidden console commands to enable first-person views and a random level generator. One suspects the *Alien Swarm* mod scene is going to get very big, very quickly.

So Valve have redeemed themselves in the eyes of many with this, as if they actually needed to. People have been genuinely surprised with their generosity and have responded with a wave of enthusiasm. The people who must be kicking themselves are poor old Team 17, who only recently released their new *Alien Breed* game, which is pretty much the same, just you have to pay for it and the co-op is rubbish in comparison.



Aliens coming any second.

There's the potential for Valve to get a lot of money with paid-for campaigns, and people would probably be happy enough to cough up the dough, so could this signal a return to a shareware business model? It's an interesting thought and one that we'd like to explore in the future, if we were able to. Ho hum.

PCZONE FREE-O-METER



0 HOURS

*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month



295 HOURS*



Demos

ON THE DVD PCZONE

***Jon 'Log' Blyth* nibbles on the free tips of the full-price asparagus**

ARMA II: OPERATION ARROWHEAD

As the Chinese teacher said to his boss

WEBSITE arma2.com

REALLY? ARE WE really going to do this? We've only got 20 pages of precious *PC ZONE* left, and we're going to go through this miserable demo charade? It's like being forced to stoke the bloody furnace at your own cremation.

I'll tell you what. Take the disc out of its sleeve and instead of placing it into your DVD tray, pop it into your mouth and hammer your face against the desk. The DVD should slide, causing grievous injury, right into your mouth. Then you can pretend you are a CD player by singing your favourite songs, as the blood from your open cheeks pools in your lap.

Then, decline all offers of medical assistance, assuring anyone that shows concern that you are having the time of your life thanks to your free DVD that hasn't really made sense for five years.



PROBLEM ZONE

Trouble with your DVD? Help is at hand!

1. If the menu doesn't appear when the disc spins up, open the Run command from the Start menu and enter D:\pcz.exe (D is the DVD drive's letter).

2. If you have a problem with a specific demo or application, check the DVD's Help section. Also ensure your PC's drivers and DirectX version are up-to-date.

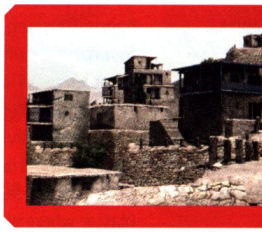
3. If that doesn't work check our forums at pczone.co.uk for fixes, or send an email to us at letters@pczone.com. Please describe the problem, what you were doing when it occurred, any error messages that came up, and your system's details.

4. If the DVD itself is faulty, send it and an SAE to Disc Department, Reader Support, Future Publishing Ltd, Bath, BA1 2BW, to get a new one.

We can only provide assistance with technical problems directly related to our cover DVD. The *PC ZONE* discs have been tested and certified virus free by an independent organisation. We recommend that you always run an up-to-date virus checker on any software before running it. Future Publishing Ltd cannot accept any responsibility for disruption, damage and/or loss to your data or your computer system that may occur while using these discs, the programs or the data on them. Ensure that you have backups of data contained on your hard drives before running any new software.

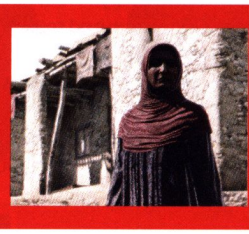


REALISTIC
I've started chewing on Dave's forearm. We've got three weeks left before the mag closes. And I'm not even that hungry, really. But his arm just looks so tasty.

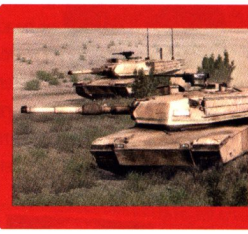


GRUELLING
I wonder how long it'll take for us to just come in and sit at our desks, before they take us to one side and tell us we're not getting paid for this? It's worth a try.

WE'RE GOING TO STARVE AND STILL YOU WANT INFORMATION



MIND YOU
I've already had a Nintendo DS charger I found on someone's desk. And there's a copy of *Zoo Tycoon 2* I'm looking to stuff up my jumper today.



ARROWSLITS
Basically everyone's just looking around the office and wondering what they can get away with stealing. In some respect this is a very exciting time.

DISCIPLES III: RENAISSANCE

Born-again hexagons

WEBSITE disciples3.ru

I'VE DONE IT again. I've written the name of a game and even done a convincing subtitle, even though I have no intention of talking about the game.



Do your own damn caption. Lazy git.

Let's talk about me and you, and how we're going to stay in touch. This has been an intense few years, and I want us to still be friends, even if this arrangement has become untenable.

Perhaps I could come around your house, and eat your biscuits in return for lightweight opinion and speculation about the release date for the next episode of *Starcraft II*. My favourite biscuit is Arrowroots. And you might want to put a towel down, because I get terribly excited.

DISCIPLE HATS



BRANCH HAT

Allows the wearer to lift trees, although it does very little of benefit for their posture.



NUN HAT

It's hard to tell if Nuns draw their sexy allure from their hats, or their lovely nun tits.

NELSON TETHERS: PUZZLE AGENT

Fettered entertainment

WEBSITE telltalegames.com/puzzleagent

I REVIEWED THIS game in this very issue. I didn't give it the best score, but that was because it traded too heavily on humour that couldn't support it.

So, this demo is the perfect opportunity to discover whether you can enjoy the puzzles, whilst not... hang on a minute! I see what you're trying to do. You're trying to trick me into talking about the demos. Well, if you're looking for some semblance of professionalism, you've come to the wrong place. Nice try, giving me a game I've reviewed. That was clever, appealing to my sense of self-referential vanity.



1. GNOME
Gnomes are above pixies, but below fairies in the woodland glade hierarchy.

2. MAN
Meet Nelson Tethers. If you met him, you'd probably tell him to piss off.

3. GNOME
Hey look, another gnome. There's almost too much going on here.

PUZZLE GREATS

3	9				2			6
	5			8	6			
2								3
	3		7					
		1		6		8		
					1		9	
4								7
			4	3			5	
8			6				3	2

SUDOKU

Sudoku is Japanese for "not making eye contact on a train". If you do more than four in your life, you've wasted it.

W	C	T	U	R	D	P	M	C	C
C	A	C	C	C	E	R	U	C	C
C	C	Z	C	C	P	O	R	S	Y
N	O	W	O	C	A	U	D	A	R
W	C	C	C	X	R	D	E	D	G
O	B	I	T	T	E	R	R	C	N
R	Y	L	E	N	O	L	E	C	A
B	U	M	S	M	E	A	R	E	D
C	C	D	E	T	A	E	F	E	D

WORD SEARCH

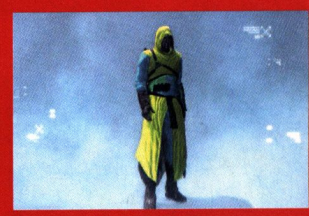
They appear in *Puzzler*, but they're not puzzles. They're head-fillers for people who'd otherwise chew themselves.

BEST OF THE REST

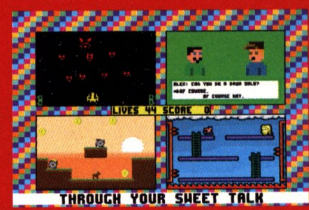
It's not all demos – we've got freeware, mods, and miscellaneous crap, too



NATION OF REINCARS
krimelogames.blogspot.com
A short but intriguing game in which you plan your reincarnations in order to help you reach god. It's slightly more baffling than you first thing.



ALTAIR COSTUME
moddb.com/mods/assassins-creed-kiddie-suit
Dress your assassin in a DayGlo outfit, then laugh at how inappropriate that is to a profession defined by "blending in".



MAN ENOUGH
bit.ly/manenoughdl
If you haven't been playing enough games lately, fix your average by playing four games at once. This will shred any masochist's nervous system.

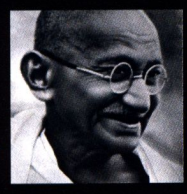


MAKING HISTORY II: THE WAR OF THE WORLD
making-history.com
I just said to Dave, "This *Making History* sounds as boring as shit." Without pausing, Dave replied "It is."

HOT DOWNLOADS

GANDHI'S HOT MAN-DANGLE

bit.ly/mandangle
Gandhi has run out of shaving cream and BICs, and has to clean up his downs below before a party. Can you help him crouch over a Bunsen burner at a height that will singe hair, but not flesh?



THE SEAGULL WITH MY FACE

bit.ly/seagullface
Help Jordan Swimly retrieve his face from a local seagull, before clearing his name of all the crimes the seagull committed while wearing it like a mask. The jury want to know you can't fly, but how do you prove a negative?





Freeware

***Jon 'Log' Blyth* does it free, for the last time**

ON THE DVD PCZONE

In the final Freeware make two chaps run around on the same keyboard; attack shapes with some scissors; help a naked guy do some shooting-type stuff; stack a load of things; and help another guy meet God and ask him, "Why, oh why, didn't you stop *PC ZONE*'s closure, you absolute git?"

RICK'S PICK



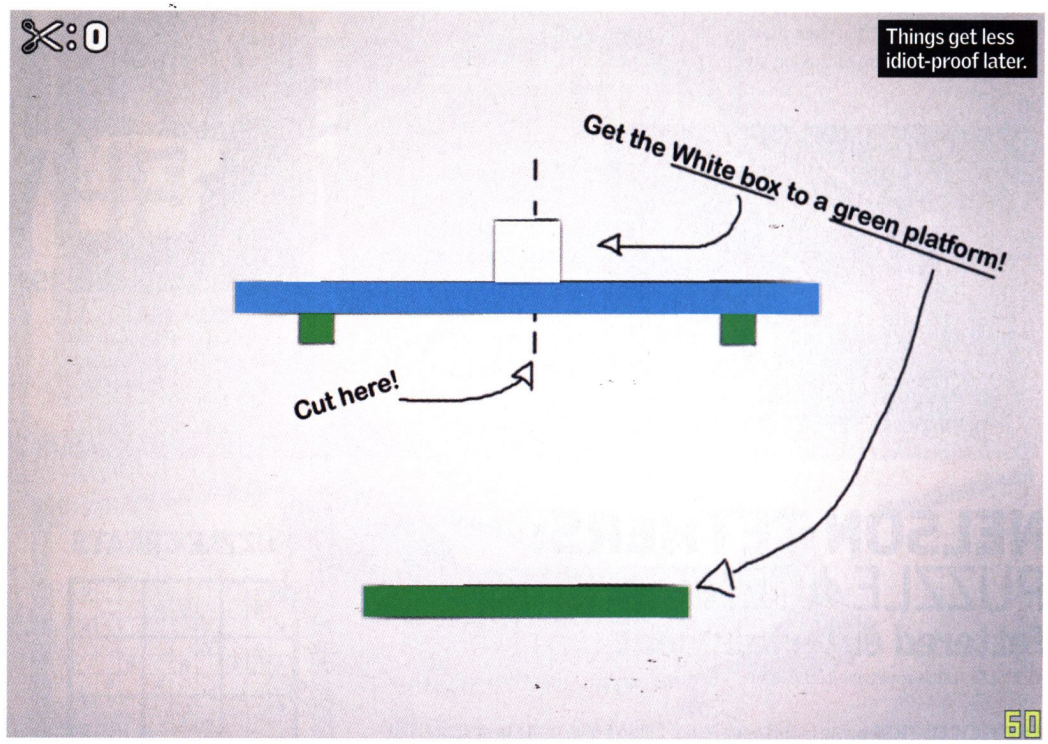
SHOOT FIRST

DEVELOPER Teknopants
WEBSITE teknopants.com/games/shootfirst

THIS GAME IS a roguelike dungeon crawl, with all the procedurally generated rooms and '80s graphics that implies. But it's a co-op game where you share the keyboard with a friend, something roguelikes, which tend to take up whole keyboards with their abbreviated commands, have been unable to do.

With no melee weapons, *Shoot First* is really a random-mapped scrolling shooter, but one with some levelling up, mini boss battles, AI companions, and armour dotted around the place, like a proper roguelike. It's an entertaining way to share your keyboard with someone you love but be warned, you'll get frustrated by the game's hard-to-avoid traps. Still, you can always play co-op on your own and use the other guy as a second life.

While it lacks the extreme depth of *NetHack* and *Dwarf Fortress* (but then, most big-budget full-priced games lack the depth of *NetHack* and *Dwarf Fortress*) this is a charming solo-developed game that will teach you how randomly-generated levels can really take a shit on you.



CUT IT

Next up: running with scissors

DEVELOPER Petri Purho **WEBSITE** kloonigames.com

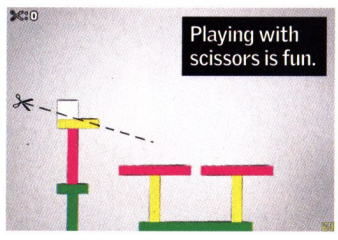
PETRI PURHO IS the rapid prototyping mind behind *Crayon Physics*, the game with such an immediately appealing and intuitive interface that it'd was ripped off a dozen times before he got around to finishing the *Deluxe* version (issue 205, 71%) of the game, all part of the danger of being so open.

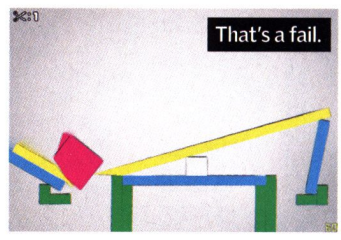
This means plagiarists are likley to be queuing up for a way to repackage and sell Purho's latest prototype, *Cut It*. It's another physics-led puzzler, but this time it doesn't involve creating shapes. Instead you take a set of scissors and slice through shapes presented to you – you can cut through anything – with the aim to get the white square onto any of the green platforms.

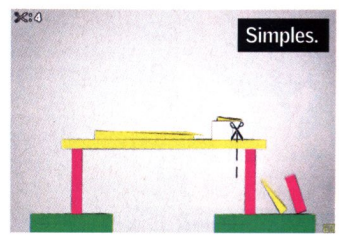
Like all the best puzzlers, *Cut It* takes you from easy levels that introduce key concepts, to mind-freezing slaps in the face. There's no hand-holding here, you're playing a rough proof-of-concept after all. Besides, the basics are so simple you won't need elaborate lessons. Yet it's surprising what you'll end up doing with a pair of scissors.

If we have any complaints it's that a single pixel can make the difference between success and failure, leading to the feeling that you're not thinking strategically, but restarting until you hit the right pixel.

That said, this is only a prototype of a game, and the fundamental idea is so compelling that we wish Purho luck in working this into his other excellent, childlike ideas. Hopefully, before someone else does this time.







TEPPOMAN 2

Run and gunning for nudists

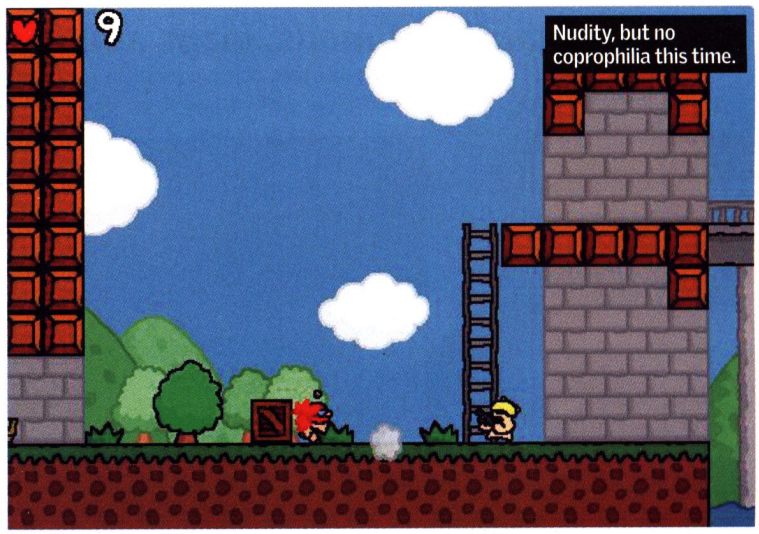
DEVELOPER Ikiki **WEBSITE** bit.ly/teppoman2dl

IKIKI IS A curious and magnificent man. While his language skills don't stretch to English that doesn't matter when you're experiencing one of his creations. He's a creator of wonderful animated GIFs – one of which features two naked men taking it in turns to defecate in his friend's mouth – and games which transcend language boundaries with their familiarity and intuition.

Teppoman 2 is the result of two years in self-imposed exile, and Ikiki's comeback with a run-and-gun shooter sequel that features his trademark naked doodles (to be fair, Teppoman does wear a cape).

With a constantly changing cycle of guns, boss battles, and cunningly hidden bananas that you need to find to progress past the boss battles, *Teppoman 2* is a great mix of platforming and gunplay.

Other games by Ikiki to look out for are the cat-butchering *Niwatori* (bit.ly/niwatoridl) the more openly nude and violent *Bokorin* (bit.ly/bokorin) and the fantastic *Tekkyuuman* (bit.ly/tekkyuumandl). All of his games are free and many are available at ikiki.sokushinbutsu.com/himoji/game.htm. Don't worry about the lack of English on the site, you're guaranteed to have fun no matter what game you grab. But if you want to play *Teppoman 2* use the bit.ly link above: it's a direct link to the game's installation Zip.



NATION OF REINCARS

God, meet worm. Worm, God

DEVELOPER Krimelo **WEBSITE** krimelogames.blogspot.com

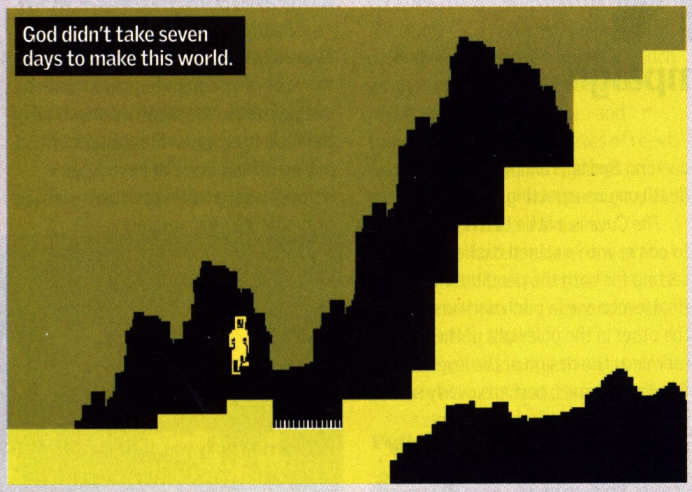
IF THERE'S ONE thing that's going to cause controversy, it's using religion as the basis of a game. And when an atheist uses a quote from the Koran as inspiration for a puzzler, you're guaranteed some complaining.

Thankfully *Nation of Reincars* isn't some kind of positive or anti-theistic propaganda. Rather, it's a strange game about reincarnation.

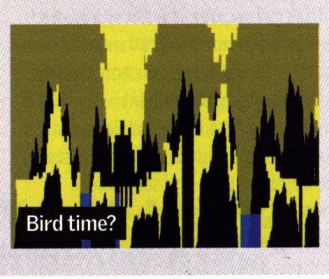
You start as a man who's killed while searching for a path to God. His death isn't game over though, but a chance for him to return to life as an animal better equipped for that part of the journey. The worm can dig around obstacles, the rabbit jumps, and the bird can fly. Each animal has a number of obstacles that are fatal to it, so you have to change form to get past them. To make things more complicated, you can only use each animal once.

So in order to meet God, and ask him why he'd put someone through such a traumatic and pointless trial, you have to reincarnate in the right order. When you get stuck, you just top yourself after dropping a reincarnation marker so God knows where to put you. And don't worry, this God is cool with suicide.

Krimelo says he's an atheist who wanted to make a game about religion, and that's what this is, a game, not some proselytizing crap from people who made *Left Behind*.







WEBGAME OF THE MONTH



PERFECT BALANCE

DEVELOPER Armor Games
WEBSITE bit.ly/armorperfectgames

LIKE A FEW of the *Flash* games available on the Armor website, *Perfect Balance* starts out feeling like a rip-off, but then develops and squirms into something slightly innovative and challenging.

Perfect Balance resembles iPhone snoozebox, *Topple*, but within the first five of its 80 levels introduces rotating platforms, and a bonus system that lets you gamble your level completion by dropping irregularly shaped gems into the mix. Really, for a genre known for dullness, it's alright.

Anyway, goodbye. *Freeplay* will miss you, but *Freeplay* has to die now. Can someone pull the plug out, please? It hurts to breathe.



Extend

The latest unofficial mods, maps and add-ons

ON THE DVD PCZONE

These pages contain maps, worlds and campaigns made for gamers by gamers. We also check out total conversions, which turn a game into a totally different beast. Mods usually come with installation instructions in readme files. Unless we say otherwise everything on these pages is on the DVD.



A scene from *When Undead Hoodies Attack.*

"What Nick has done is impressive, especially for a first-time level designer"

RUINATION

The Official *PC ZONE Left 4 Dead 2* campaign

MOD FOR Left 4 Dead 2 **WEBSITE** pczone.co.uk

FOR MONTHS, NICK Brakespear has been chewing his hands to the bone during many a long, long night in front of the *Hammer* editor, aiming to make the official *PC ZONE Left 4 Dead 2* campaign the bestest set of maps in the world.

Now they're finished and it's time to answer the question - have his months of toil have produced an amazing gem or just a incredibly well-polished turd? Firstly, there are only three maps in *Ruination*, but they're all extremely challenging. Horde triggers are everywhere and the pace is relentless. Things get even more difficult in Versus, with very few areas for the Survivors to seek solace. Nearly everything that's good for the Survivors is protected by something very bad indeed.

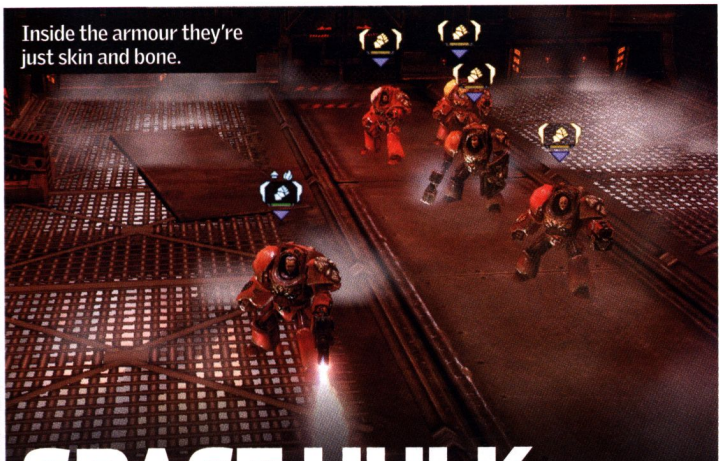
Take the first level, *The Cave*, for example. Starting off with only pistols, the objective is to find some more powerful weapons from somewhere, but the room where you uncover these contains a devilish hiding place for a cunning Spitter, raining down gooey death on unsuspecting players.

The Cave is a little taster of what's to come, with a ruined castle as the setting for both the penultimate and final levels: one in pitch darkness and the other in the pale light of the morning. The design of the levels is fiendish at times, perhaps overly so, with more than a few areas where players could easily get confused and frustrated with their inability to divine what to do next. But without some of the more obtuse moments, the campaign would be over too quickly, so they're a necessary evil.

What Nick has done is impressive, especially for a first-time level designer. While he didn't go as far as to create his own textures, he's made the most out of the tools that were at his disposal, pulling off tricks we've never seen before in maps made both by professionals and amateurs.

Ruthlessly difficult at times and with an insanely tough Versus mode, *Ruination* has pleasingly turned out to be a truly excellent campaign.

What Nick should do now is make two more maps and put the campaign on l4dmaps.com for all the world to see. But for now, only you, the *PC ZONE* reader who was loyal until the end, will be able to play it.


Inside the armour they're just skin and bone.

SPACE HULK

Been a long time coming

MOD FOR Dawn of War II **WEBSITE** moddb.com/mods/space-hulk-mod

THIS MOD, AND the game it's for, are based on a great British science-fiction institution: *Warhammer 40,000*. So it's with some measure of irony that we find ourselves playing a French-developed mod for a Canadian game based on our beloved franchise.

To be fair, there's a *Space Hulk*-shaped void in the gaming world at the moment and, as such, we have little choice but to turn to the ingenuity of the modding community. And ingenious they are, if often a little overambitious.

Space Hulk attempts to turn *Dawn of War II* into a something akin to *Diablo*. Terminator-armoured soldiers take the place of army units, and stomp about an eerie derelict fresh from the Warp, full of Genestealers.

A lot of effort has been put into this mod, with new maps, gameplay and even a short (but dramatic) intro video, and there's even an attempt to implement manual character controls. Unfortunately, the result is a little too eccentric, filled with French text and frustratingly specific demands.

Offering (and due to difficulty, requiring) co-op play, *Space Hulk* is worth a look, but needs a lot of work.

EXTERMINATUS

The bugs are everywhere

MOD FOR Half-Life 2 **WEBSITE** moddb.com/mods/exterminatus

THIS IS ANOTHER mod set in the *Warhammer 40,000* universe which attempts to create what *Warhammer* fans who've played the *Half-Life* mod *Natural Selection* (unknownworlds.com/ns) long for: classic aliens vs marines multiplayer action, with added Chainswords and Lictors.

Much like the *Space Hulk* mod, *Exterminatus* has its fair share of issues at this point. Animations and level designs are a bit rough around the edges, and the mod tends to crash on map changes.

That being said, even with so much development work that's ahead of it, there's something undeniably enjoyable about *Exterminatus*. Perhaps it's the "realistic" Bolter that fires slow, heavy rounds. Perhaps it's the terrifying sight of a Carnifex thundering towards you, or the novelty of seeing Zoanthropes floating about the level. Maybe there's something about the aliens vs marines scenario that just can't fail.

Whatever the case, if you can look beyond *Exterminatus'* issues, *Warhammer 40,000* fans should respect it's adherence to the source material, and everyone else should enjoy stomping about in power armour shooting (or more likely, being killed by) things with too many claws.


He's not attacking, he's dancing.

HUMAN ERROR CO-OP

Another tiny bit of Gordon's world

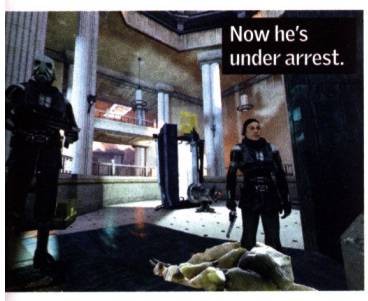
MOD FOR Half-Life 2 **WEBSITE** moddb.com/mods/half-life-2-short-stories

THERE'S SOMETHING EXTRA special about tricking your teammates. Like playing as the Spy in *Team Fortress 2*, *Human Error*'s co-op mode fulfils your desire to be an utterly devious bastard, and then rewards you for it.

A team, consisting of four players, assumes the role of Civil Protection officers, the white-masked police from the *Half-Life 2* universe. Tasked with defending a vulnerable objective, such as an Advisor pod, the team must maintain power generators and thumpers and fend off waves of rebels (including humans, Vortigaunts, and a couple of aliens from the original *Half-Life*) until the timer runs out.

To complicate matters, one of the defenders is a traitor, whose task is to undermine those very same defences without being caught.

Though still in beta, this mod exudes polish in every area and is only really let down by the initial confusion felt by new players. With a tutorial, clearer feedback and some new levels, this could well rival *Kane & Lynch 2*'s traitor-based multiplayer game Fragile Alliance (reviewed on page 66).

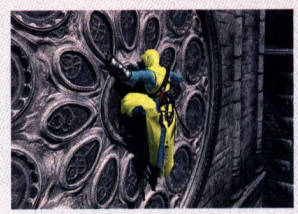

Now he's under arrest.


The guys as they get ready.

"Could well rival *Kane & Lynch 2*'s traitor-based multiplayer game"

MOD CONS!

The add-ons to avoid



KIDDIE SUIT

MOD FOR Assassin's Creed
WEBSITE moddb.com/mods/assassins-creed-kiddie-suit

The creator of this garish outfit claims it took him 15 minutes. Let us consider what could've been achieved in that time. One might have taken a long shower, made a sandwich, or enjoyed a naughty picture or two. Alas, this was not the case.



MAP MAKING LEFT 4 DEAD 2

"Witch!" screams *Nick Brakespear* at a random old lady

MOD FOR Left 4 Dead 2 **WEBSITE** l4d.com

TIME HAS NO meaning anymore. I count the days in recompiles and have created a real-world nav mesh out of coloured paper to help me navigate around my house. A Post-it on my bed declares "PLAYER_START" while my fridge is similarly marked "CHECKPOINT". My last scrap of sanity was nurtured by the knowledge that I'd finished my task. Until PC ZONE told me to make a Versus version of my campaign.

"Also," David told me, "we'd like you to do it crawling through broken glass."

This wouldn't be so bad if players weren't such utter bastards. Adapting a regular *Left 4 Dead 2* map for Versus play resembles designing a theme park attraction for bored terrorists. At every opportunity, they'll find some way to turn a perfectly benign feature into a bomb.

If I put a potted plant into the game, someone would get stuck on it or I'd discover that Tanks suffer from a paralysing fear of shrubbery. And when the players aren't defying physics by becoming lodged in concrete walls, they're failing to read the manual. Do you think "Read Me" is a suggestion? These files are a desperate plea from a sleep-deprived developer who only wanted to make a water feature, but discovered that a fountain becomes an ICBM with the aid of some creative bunny-hopping.

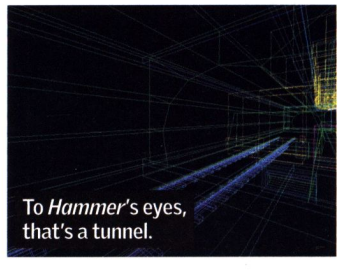
THE ENEMY

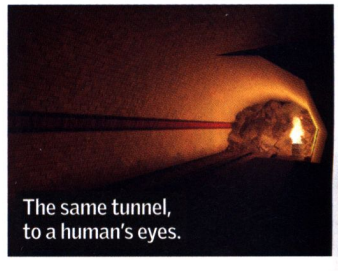
Child-proofing the level becomes a major component of the level's design. Can the toddler/terrorist/player hybrid figure out where to go? Can they make it from A to B without throwing a tantrum and sliding into a parallel dimension? What if the children in question are mutant freaks capable of leaping into the air like giant, shrieking fleas? Yes, designing Versus-capable maps for *Left 4 Dead 2* requires that you consider the existence of giant shrieking flea-children.

As far as games have come, their design is often limited to a linear sequence of scares. Detailed structures full of props give the illusion of player choice, when in actuality we spend most of our time running through narrow tunnels, walled in by invisible clipping brushes and level boundaries. To deal with the *L4D2* flea-child scenario, such clipping brushes must be placed in all the seemingly inaccessible locations and the roof of major structures protected in some way, yet space must be given for the Special Infected to spawn out of sight of the Survivors and ambush them.

DESIGNING PARITY

There's a fine and precarious balance between protecting Versus gameplay

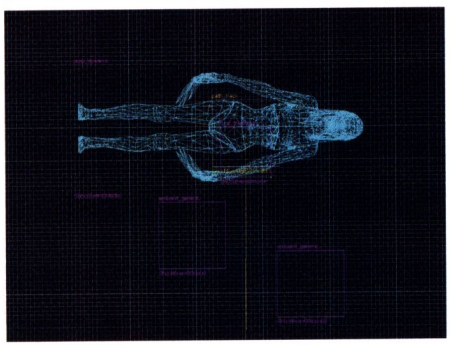

To *Hammer*'s eyes, that's a tunnel.

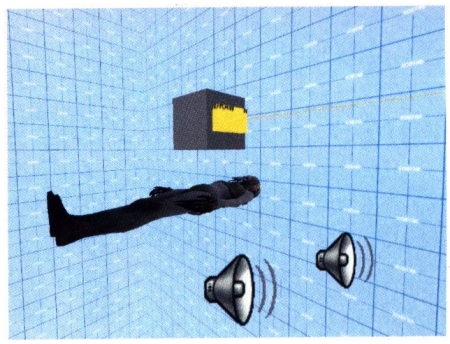

The same tunnel, to a human's eyes.

A LINEAR SEQUENCE OF SCARES

Do not look up – you won't like what you see

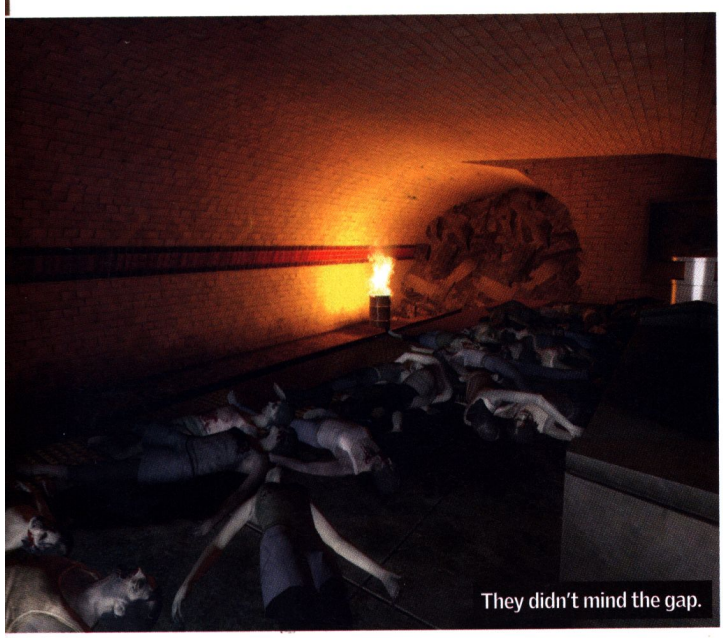




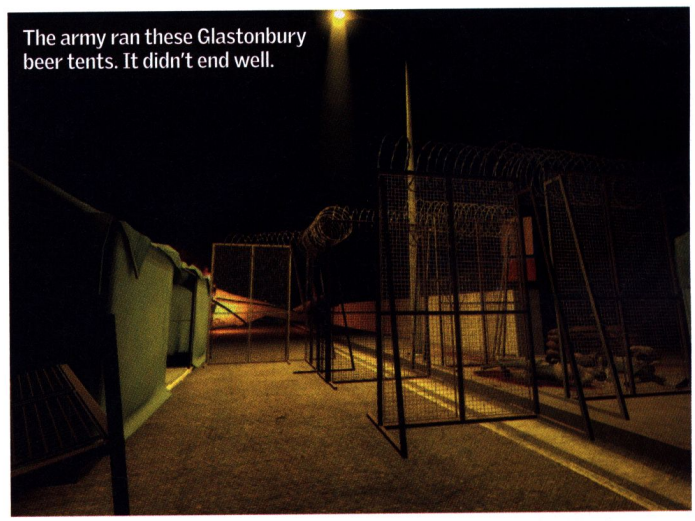


You may notice that the castle in *Ruination* is haunted. These 'shock events' as I call them are handled by a complex array of simple mechanisms. Take the Witch on the ceiling, in keeping with the theme park analogy she operates like an animatronic doll and isn't an NPC. When the player trips an invisible trigger, the Witch model appears, is assigned a ladder-climbing animation, and is pushed along the ceiling by an unseen moving entity that follows a predetermined track. The chopper in the finale operates in a similar manner.

All shock event components are technically present on the level during each playthrough, but are disabled and thus invisible in their default state. Each time the level is played a trigger near the start of the map picks, at random, which events will be enabled. The events themselves only occur when another trigger, or a timer, fires its output. These chance frights all helps to add to a map's replayability.



They didn't mind the gap.



The army ran these Glastonbury beer tents. It didn't end well.

and stifling it. A single obstacle, a small shadowy corner, can make the difference between a match being challenging or laughably short.

If you give the Infected too many opportunities, then you'll have given the Survivors a no-win scenario. Conversely, as the Infected team's spawning has to occur out of the Survivors' lines of sight, creating an open environment without any obstacles means that the zombies can't get anywhere near the humans.

Equipment must also be addressed. Standard co-op maps often feature item spawns that the AI Director may tweak depending on player performance. Such features add a level of replayability, but can become hugely unfair in Versus play.

The competitive element also produces more erratic Survivor behaviour, they know the other team is waiting for an opportunity to hump the backs of their heads, and it makes them twitchy and even more prone to toddler-terrorist tantrums.

This coupled with Survivor damage values that differ from co-op play, and a scoring system affected by health, the end result is a noticeably different gameplay flow for the level.

I find myself asking, "Would pills solve everything?" as I work on such issues, and more often than not, they would. Popping pills at the right moment can save an entire team, and so the placing of them can save a level from becoming a kind of Kobayashi Maru.

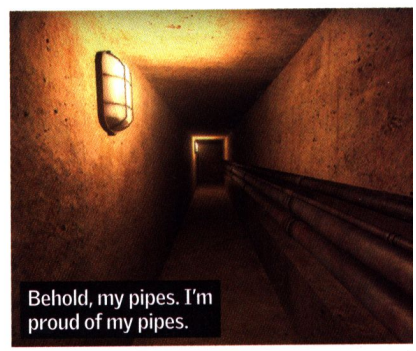
After working tirelessly to prevent players from maiming themselves, I allow my pride to get the better of me. Having reached a new final version of my two-map campaign, my last beleaguered shred of mental health drifts away in the breeze as I decide to make a third level.

Having now learned the art of *Hammer*, I reason that it shouldn't take me as long to make the third level, as it did the first and second.

END OF THE ROAD

Two weeks later, *The Road* is finished. A prelude to *The Ruins*, *The Road* sees the Survivors fighting their way through an abandoned subway station and up to the surface, where unending waves of undead await them. Built with skills that I simply didn't possess when starting, the subway's architecture is a step forward for me, featuring curving tunnels painted with a more diverse texture palette.

I'm proud of my tunnels, but more so of the level's ending. Finishing where *The Ruins* begins, there isn't a conventional safe room, but an open-air level transfer.



Behold, my pipes. I'm proud of my pipes.

As an odd twist, the transition still requires a checkpoint door to be opened, and so the door is hidden underground and silently opened by a Survivor activating a proximity trigger.

And with the closing of my hidden door, I end what has been a maddening and tiring, but fascinating project.

I dedicate this campaign to *PC ZONE*, and hope that, as you blow the heads off zombies, you think of us. PCZ

Online Zone

What's new in *PC ZONE*'s forum and Fight Club

The last ever gaming free-for-all has done its duty and now it is time to say farewell



At the end, it's traditional to go back to the beginning, which is what we did with Fight Club, choosing *Counter-Strike: Source* as the place to make our last bow. Our last tweets, our final chat with you, our beloved-yet-mental readers and our loyal forumites making their final published comments. All of these things are here, one final time.

tw@tter

Tweeting like a bird



WE CERTAINLY GAVE you a lot to do over the past month, as Twitter-based competitions came out of every orifice, even the unsightly ones.

'Cans', mostly, but other things as well. If you're wearing said cans (headphones to the uninitiated) feel proud that you were lurking on Twitter at 11am (almost) every day, desperately scrambling to answer the questions. Especially @darth_ careful, who was first to answer pretty much every day, and so had to be disqualified on every occasion bar one.

Of course, we were also inundated with responses to the news we were closing, so thanks to all of you who posted tributes and big shitting eye-beams of hatred to all of those who were mean and horrible to us. May your PCs give you great joy forever more.

For now, that's all. Make sure to follow all the *PC ZONE* writers, such as @DavidBrownPCZ, @Batsphinx, @misterbrilliant, @disappointment, and many, many others. If you don't, their parents will hit them and they'll cry.

Their tear ducts have already been drained by all your responses, so cheer them up by following their Twitter feeds. See you in the other ether readers!

FIGHT CLUB

The Final Fight

WHAT GOES AROUND comes around. Back to the front. And so on and so on. It was a straight toss up between *Counter-Strike: Source* and *Team Fortress 2* to be the venue for the last ever Fight Club, with the former winning out because of it being more ancient. We're ancient, in magazine terms, so it was the logical choice.

Things warmed up on a long-forgotten custom map, Irish Castle, that we'd put on the server over a year ago (blame Steve Hogarty for that one guys) but, while it was terrible, it did give people a chance to get into the game before the actual combat began.

The first map was de_cbble and, as usual, the counter-terrorists dominated the early rounds. It wasn't until Fight Club regular Flatline began to rack up an impressive killing spree for the terrorists that the tide turned. Next up was cs_office, which was greeted with much rejoicing.

An absolute classic of a map, both sides fought valiantly and it was incredibly even throughout. Muffin Muncher roared to a score of 8-0 with some frankly mind-boggling shooting, especially down the long side hallway.

The terrorists fought back, with michaelkellerherthename and our very own David providing dogged resistance in that same passage, before an aborted team photograph was taken, the pile of dead bodies fitting on our final night.



Yep, it's yet another visual metaphor.

Next on the map list was de_dust2, favourite of the AWP whore. Wandy made his last bow and entered to some rapturous applause, showing the skills that have made him the go-to guy on the *PC ZONE* team whenever anything related to *Counter-Strike* came up. His terrorist allies formed an impromptu conga line behind him, serving as significant backup on Wandy's many B rushes. Then he got auto swapped to the CT side and the cries of "Splitter!" were legion.

Special mention has to go to Greyham, whose incompetence during one particular round will go down in the annals of Fight Club history. Well done, that man.

Finally, de_piranesi rocked up. A pistol round that saw David kill five counter-terrorists in quick succession blended into another very even contest, with Wandy not being so successful.

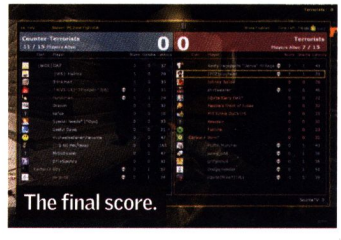
Eventually, a group photograph was arranged, everyone clustering at the bottom of the battlements and, when the signal was given, your intrepid photographer hurled himself over the rampart, while grenades were thrown into the pack.

As all good things must come to an end, and so it is that we leave you to fight your own battles with random internet losers with too much time on their hands.

Perhaps our paths will cross again sometime, but the best way to remember us is as we went out – a ludicrous P90 rush on cs_italy that ended in certain death. Never say we didn't go down fighting.

"Perhaps our paths will cross again sometime"


The work of a bomb disposal inexpert.



The final score.

NOTES FROM THE FORUM

How will the forumites live on when the end cometh?

SHAKERMAKER07: Maybe a bit of cheer up porn is in order?

AMES: Does anyone know where I can go for trusted reviews and humorous writing without my monthly fix of *PC ZONE*? Any good websites with even a tiny fraction of what made the magazine great?

SHAKERMAKER07: Give me your number and I'll weekly call you up pretending to be Will Porter. Hey, it could work.

AMES: It's a novel idea but I'm just not sure how comfortable I'd be listening to you whilst having a poo. Especially if its a noisy one. And I don't think I could hold it in for a week.

SHAKERMAKER07: I'd be pooing too.

DR_DARK: How about I just come round and give you all a kiss?

MADAMEYE: There's no point any more. It's all over...

CHO-KONNIT: I think Future Publishing can expect a large influx of jobbies in shoe boxes.

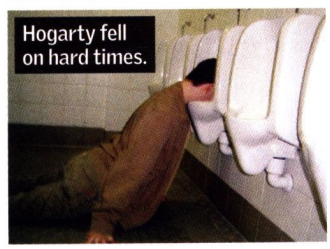
JONNY_P66: I can sometimes have giant poos that really stretch my ring out. And the other is after having a wank my willy goes a bit like a water balloon for a day or so.

SQUITS: I like to think of giant butterflies, flapping their wings all over my naked body. While masturbating.

DISTURBING_AIM: I remember one of the Amiga magazines saying, "Last ever mag out next month." We all bought it then there was another one the next month.

I am at a loss at this moment in time. *PC ZONE*, my best friend for years, what am I to read-re-read and read again in the WC?

SQUITS: I didn't post it, but will now, my Nan died the same week they announced the closure. It's not fair losing two things that you love in the same week.



Hogarty fell on hard times.



FEATURE GAMING AT WORK

A FRAG TOO FAR?

Maiming managers. Carving up colleagues. Butchering bosses. All in office hours? Sounds too good to be true, Adam Phillips investigates.

THE QUAKE KILLERS

DVD Software ANTIGAME THE GAMES ELIMINATOR

Ah, toilet humour. With an actual toilet.

ZONE CHAT

Jerking of tears



Got the message yet people?

EMOTIONS WEAR RUNNING high as the chat room filled up with those wishing to pay their respects to this here magazine. It was even enough to stir the sleeping giants of the past, as Paul Presley, Ed Zitron, Will Porter and Steve Hogarty all popped in to be swamped by the intense stream of chatter.

Prezzer, as he's getting on a bit now, felt scared by the dominance of youth, the enthusiasm and energy they put into their discussion too much for the old soldier.

"Aaargh, can't keep up!" he exclaimed as the torrent of words overwhelmed him. To be fair, he wasn't the only one.

"Can everyone rip up the first copy of *PC Gamer* they're sent, if that happens, and then send it to the editor?" bellowed Mr Porter (Batsphinx), clearly enraged by some rumours that we can't talk about here, but which might be true.

Ed Zed (Mr Zitron) was devastated that he'd never get to read Adam Glick's sweet, sweet words ever again, while Disc10 continued with the anti-*PC Gamer* theme, saying he would create a papier-mâché effigy of the Future logo and then burn it.

We wouldn't advise you to do that, Disc10, it being a health hazard and other things.

Liquid went further, calling for someone to find the Culky Tank and storm Future's offices with it.

On a more peaceful note, Earl of Sandwich weighed in with some helpful tips for how to get over the loss, stressing that buying a new, completely random magazine each month would ease the pain.

G_Man_007 said he'd never forget being given a goodie bag by Log that contained the original copy of the *Little Britain* game that was reviewed in the mag. A collector's item, for sure.

Julian Callan was pleased to get *Farming Simulator 2009*, while others were curious as to why they got sent anything at all. It was one of those mysteries of life, people. These things just happen.

The last words ever have to go to Useful Dave, who bravely saluted and said: "Have fun in death, chaps!"

We'll certainly try to. Oh, and Mad_AI, right at the end, said: "I love Log, in a sex way."

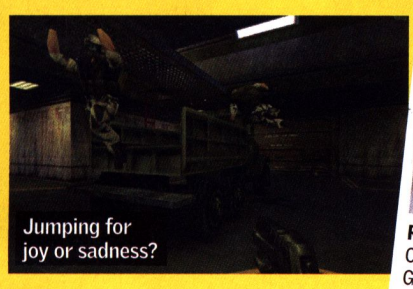
Well, it's time that we were all honest: who doesn't?

A TRIBUTE TO PC

Will Porter gathers PC gaming illuminati's memories of *PC ZONE*

OVER THE PAST 17 and half years, *PC ZONE* has been a giant thorn in the side of developers, digging into their flesh in retribution for shoddy work and waiting for them under fresh silk sheets when they create something worthy of praise. All in the name of making sure we gamers get the best games we deserve.

Now it's the developers' turn to tell you exactly what they think of *PC ZONE*. Were we a friend or foe? Were we too much of a thorn, or too much of a silky sheet? Did we make them laugh or weep? Time to find out what the biggest PC game developers really thought of us.



Jumping for joy or sadness?



Randy Pitchford CEO and president of Gearbox Software

01 NOT THE END

"I was saddened to hear the news of *PC ZONE*'s end. I've been a reader for many years and have grown to enjoy and respect the particular flavour and quality of your magazine. Your audience will miss *PC ZONE*, I know I will. But I'm confident that the unique style you've developed will live on. And make a kick-ass final issue."



The real *Unreal*.

Mark Rein – Vice-president of Epic Games

02 WALL OF FAME

"It is with great sadness that we witness the demise of *PC ZONE*. Some of the proudest moments we've had involved hanging mounted *PC ZONE* covers, which featured one of our games on them, on the cover wall at Epic. We considered each one of those a badge of honour. I want to express our gratitude for all the support you've given to us and the service you've done for the PC gaming industry, both in the UK and around the world. We will miss you!"

03 NERDGASMIC

"Can I curse? I hope so. Because the only thing I could think of when I heard *PC ZONE* was coming to an end was, 'Shit'. As a gamer, I'll always love the PC because the things I play are mouse/keyboard affairs, with tons of detail that you got to have your nose right up against the screen to take in. And *ZONE* is nearly the last of a dying breed, a place to perv over hi-res images and long, loving previews of hardcore PC games.

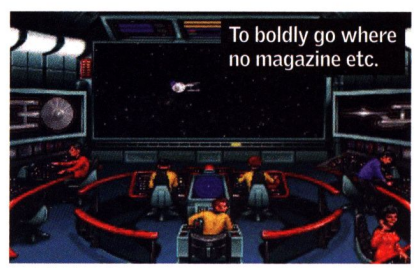
"Wanna learn about that new turn-based war game from Russia? Read *ZONE*. Wanna read a think-piece on some old MicroProse game? Read *ZONE*. Wanna feel a place where all the nerdy energy in the PC gaming space is crystallized into a physical product every single month? Read *ZONE*. Thanks for the memories, *PC ZONE* crew. You'll be missed."



Ken Levine President, Irrational Games

04 PASSING OF AN AGE

"Having been a PC gamer myself, long before a console one, I'm especially sad to see one of the first magazines to cover the space go away. It feels like the end of an era."



To boldly go where no magazine etc.



Brian Fargo – CEO of inXile Entertainment and ex-Interplay god

ZONE



PC ZONE fans vent their anger.

05 WE'D TAKE YOU!

"We fondly remember the massive and bloody cruelty of Charlie Brooker's cartoons that got you banned from some UK stores. One of our senior QA guys once did an interview for *ZONE* in which he extolled the virtues of QA as an entrance to the industry. He's still the senior tester on *Total War*.

"Our creative director, Mike Simpson, said his only regret with *PC ZONE* is, 'We didn't poach any of their staff'. With half of the old *Gamer* team working here, it's not for a lack of trying.

"In summary, it's been an awesome ride and it's sad to see *ZONE* go."



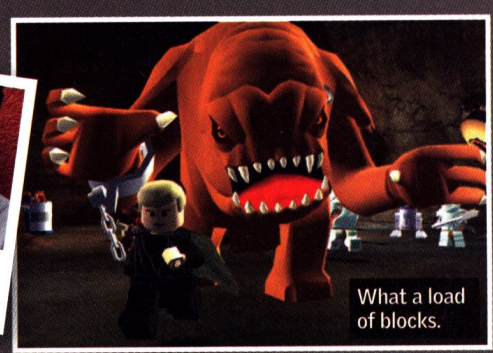
Kieran Brigden
Communications Manager, Creative Assembly

06 PCZ: THE GAME?

"Goodbye *PC ZONE*. Thanks for your words and pictures. We were planning to make a new LEGO game which brought to life your monthly adventures through the medium of cute block-based platforming. But now we won't. See you!"



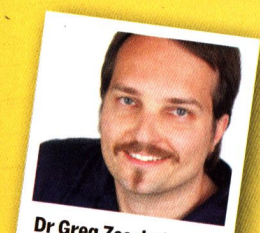
Jonathan Smith
Head of Production at Traveller's Tales



What a load of blocks.



BioWare: pre-*Baldur's Gate*.



Dr Greg Zeschuk
Co-founder of BioWare

07 CANUKE THRILLER

"One of our biggest thrills was getting our *Shattered Steel* review in *PC ZONE*. We used to get it in Canada and it was, especially compared to American publications of the time, of a much higher quality. It was beefy, full of high-quality art and so well done. I still have this vault of all the issues we have..."

"*PC ZONE* is nearly the last of a dying breed"

08 THE BEST

"I'm sad to see *PC ZONE* go, but I'm certain that some of the people involved will rise up as part of something new with the same passion for games. My best memory is maybe selfish, having *PC ZONE* declare *Deus Ex [For the heretics among you, Harvey was the lead design on this phenomenal game – Ed]* the best PC game ever was just completely stunning.

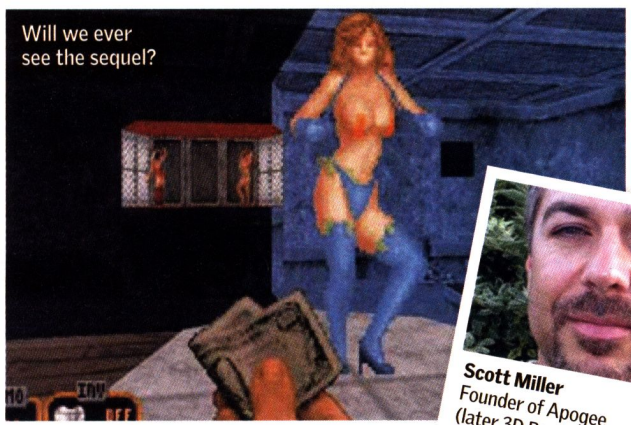
"Moments like that are life-changing at a very personal level, subjective, hard to even put into meaningful words. That sort of recognition is not only gratifying, but it helps guide game developers in a particular direction, shaping the future.

"You guys did such good work, so all I can say is thanks from all of us who love games of all stripes."



Not even Denton can save us now.

Harvey Smith
Game Director, Arkane Studios



Will we ever see the sequel?

Scott Miller
Founder of Apogee (later 3D Realms)

10 UNHAPPY DUKE

"I've read *PC ZONE* since the beginning, and have learned from every issue. For the last many years it's been my only printed source for PC gaming news. And PC gaming will always remain my home, at least until the day comes when shooters don't need to be dumbed down to accommodate console controllers.

"I'll miss *PC ZONE*'s biting attitude and to-the-point opinions. This is the magazine Duke would read. That's the best compliment I can make."

09 LORE MAKER

"I remember fondly the support *PC ZONE* offered for the *Lands of Lore* series. The editorial clearly appreciated the effort that went into the scale and complexity of the world and characters that made *Lands of Lore* a beloved series. They also acknowledged the trade-offs we made in real-time graphics in order to support the vast range of hardware in the market worldwide at that time.

"Truly a committed group of journalists who loved the complex story games Westwood was known to create. We'll miss the label but will always remember the people."



"That's King Blessed to you!"



Louis Castle
Co-founder of Westwood Studios



It all worked out in the end.

11 PAINFUL HONESTY

"*PC ZONE*, bless 'em, were the first magazine to review the original *Broken Sword*. They were given a half-finished version by the publisher, asked to review it as if it was finished, and slagged it off.

"Thankfully their detrimental reception was unique amongst the reviews. But we came to forgive and then to love them for their honesty and irreverence. They will be greatly missed."



Charles Cecil
Managing Director at Revolution Software

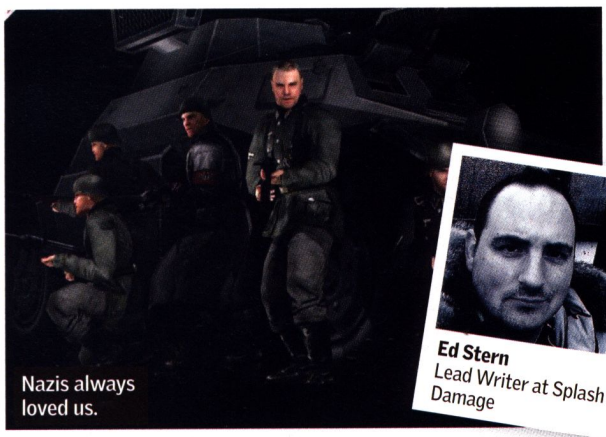


12 GOODBYE OLD FRIEND

"It's been a rocky road of highs and lows, of cooperation and communication, previews, reviews and interviews. Plus, as developers, sitting on the edge of our seats waiting to see that *PC ZONE* review score or, as industry insiders, laughing at *PC ZONE*'s low scores for competing products. We've seen child journalists turning into industry and showbiz tycoons. We've framed their covers and put them on our walls.

"So it's with deep sadness, regret and near suicidal depression that we say goodbye to an old friend much loved, much admired and very much appreciated. Thanks for all the ink!"

Peter Molyneux
Creative Director, Microsoft Game Studios Europe



Ed Stern
Lead Writer at Splash Damage

13 GOODBYE CULTURE

"It's a real shame this is the last issue of *'C ZONE* and we feel the loss keenly. *'ZONE* dispensed life-giving puffs of oxygen back when Splash Damage was but a mod team. The *'ONE* featured us in its '*Best Of British*' series, which really made us feel like we were up to something. The *'NE* was always positive without being uncritical, and generally did the platform and mod scene proud. And let us not forget the long and broad shadow that the *'E* will cast for years to come.

"Its telltale tone, its standout style, as former ink-stained-wretch-now-Flippant-Seer-In-Chief Charlie Brooker put it 'a cross between *Viz* and *Which?*', it endures and flavours the entire games culture. And thus, culture.

"And now there's nothing left. Did you see what we did there? We made the title '*PC ZONE*' disappear. It's enormously laboured look-at-us, we-know-you-know-we-know-what-we-did *PC ZONE*-esque half-jokes like that we'll miss the most. That and the extraordinary vigour and potency of its readers.

"Best of luck to all involved, you'll all go on to even greater great greatness."



"As Brooker put it 'a cross between *Viz* and *Which?*"



Emil Pagliarulo
Lead designer, Bethesda Softworks

14 A REVELATION

"As an American developer and gamer, I continually found myself shocked by *PC ZONE*. Every month I read through a magazine that somehow managed to combine wit, profanity, insight, analysis and honesty in a way I never thought possible.

"But what really impressed me was the fact that this irreverent British magazine transcended borders, and truly represented PC gamers the world over. It's been a great run, guys, you'll be sorely missed."



PC ZONE – totally annihilated.

15 IT'S ART



Chris Taylor
CEO and founder of Gas Powered Games

"I was walking through the office, and we have your magazine covers up on our walls as posters, so we totally feel the support you have given us. *PC ZONE* are a part of our company and our culture.

"Those early days of *Total Annihilation* and *Cavedog* are very special times. The community and the support that we had from all over the world, it was an amazing experience, and one that I will hold onto till I'm gone from this world. And believe me, words alone cannot express the appreciation to all those who built mods, ran sites, and did so much to spread the word on the game, first among them were top-notch gaming magazines like *PC ZONE*. If I could buy a million copies of your magazine to keep you in business I would!

"Feel the love from all of us here at Gas Powered Games, and the sadness... please know how much your support meant to us!"



Look at what Acti could have won.

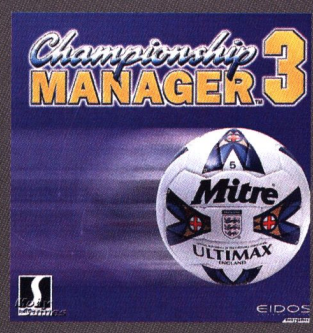
16 A GREY DAY DAWNS



Vince Zampella
Co-founder of Respawn Studios

"I was thinking back to when *PC ZONE* first started up, and it was far enough back that I couldn't pinpoint just how long it had been. After looking it up it was even longer than I had realized: looks like it has been 17 years?! We have shared many reviews, from games I've worked on to games I couldn't wait to get my hands on. This is a sad day. Best wishes to everyone, land safely!"

17 PROPER CHAMPIONS



"I remember *PC ZONE* as one of the first big games magazines to give our game (then *Championship Manager*) and ourselves some proper respect. It felt like the guys playing it over there weren't clouded by fancy press releases or the game's lack of graphics and had simply come across a game they liked. It didn't matter whether it was made by a glitzy team at EA or two brothers from Shropshire. This was entirely in keeping with the down-to-earth nature of the magazine and the top guys we were speaking to back then: Jeremy Wells and Patrick McCarthy.

"I read the magazine on and off for a while, and I always found it entertaining and funny and I was sad to hear it was ending.

"To *PC ZONE*. *raises a glass*"



Oliver Collyer
Founder of Sports Interactive

18 INDIE PROMOTER



Feargus Urquhart
President of Obsidian and Black Isle legend

"I was incredibly sad to hear that *PC ZONE* was heading toward your final issue. Over the last five years, *PC ZONE* was my favourite magazine to get every month with the great covers, fun interviews and irreverent things said about games and gaming. And games always got a fair shake in the magazine, plus the articles on small and indie games led me to download games that I would have absolutely missed otherwise. Kudos to the last 17 years, you'll be missed!"



Epic still love the PC, honest.

Mike Capps
President, Epic Games

19 PINTS ARE ON EPIC

"I just heard that *PC ZONE* will be shutting down the presses after 17 years, and I can't decide if I'm heartbroken or pissed off. Both, I think.

"For years, *PC ZONE* was literally the only games magazine I read. This kind of loss to the industry makes me want to go online and frag someone... which is what reading their magazine has made me want to do every month for 17 years.

"I can't tell you how many times I've pointed a new gamer to *PC ZONE* for the 'must play' lists. Whenever we'd discuss which media to contact about a new product, *PC ZONE* would be in the top rank. You earned that with great reporting, fast turnarounds, great layouts, and most of all, respectful treatment of games, gamers, and game developers.

"Sorry, guys. First pint's on me."



Doug Lombardi
Vice-president of Marketing, Valve

16 GOLDEN TIMES

"A favourite song writer of mine once wrote and recorded a sad bit of truth: 'The future has to change, and to change you've gotta destroy.' "Well, change is upon us and the golden age of print has clearly come to an end. Gone are the days of rushing to the mailbox to see if one of our favourite import magazines was there for the finding.

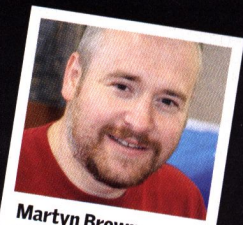
"With the passing of *PC ZONE* the industry has not only lost one of its longest-running magazines, but one of the most cleverly-written and insightful news authorities.

"*ZONE* was a magazine oozing personality. Be that the stylish wit of Mr Woods.



The dry, but telling prose of Mr Sefton. Or the always-finding-the-silver-ling-in-the-shit-pile style of Mr Korda. The work of these gents, and the many others who treated us each month to their writings for decades at *ZONE*, will be sorely missed.

"Here's hoping the digital age can reach the level of entertainment delivered in *ZONE*. And cheers to all the men and women who put it together. May happy and fruitful days lie ahead for you all."



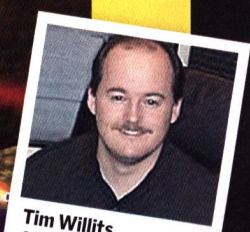
Martyn Brown
Studio Director, Team17 Software Ltd.

18 EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY!

"*PC ZONE* has saved my skin so many times. The world will be a sadder place without it. However, since we changed the cleaning company, we rarely run out of bog roll these days."



What would lunch be without *Quake*?



Tim Willits
Creative Director at id Software

21 LONG-DISTANCE READER

"*PC ZONE* has been one of my favourite PC magazines. Of all the magazines, both in the US and Europe, *PC ZONE* is the only game magazine I have a subscription to. Yes, it's hard to believe that the only gaming magazine I read is shipped to me from the UK every month but it is. I'll miss *PC ZONE*..."

"It's with great sadness, regret and near suicidal depression that we say goodbye to an old friend much loved"

STEVE HILL'S

NEVERQUEST

Steve Hill finally attempts Real Life...



THIS IS THE end. These are the last words I will ever write in *PC ZONE*. After the best part of a decade spent trawling through the nether regions of the absurdly abbreviated MMORPGS, it's over.

So how to mark it? There was talk of going back to where it all began, with a farewell group tour of *EverQuest*. That was scuppered after we remembered what a massive pain in the arse Sony were last time we tried it. There was also a brief suggestion of revisiting *World of Warcraft*, but the fuckers couldn't even muster up a last bit of game time.



Aw, a purdy flower.

Sod it all, I'm leaving the capsule. There are people out there that can hurt you, but I am going to attempt the world's biggest game, one enjoyed by almost seven billion people on a subscription-free basis. I'm entering the real world.

Quickly selecting my character, I opt for a rudimentary outfit of shorts, T-shirt, trainers and sunglasses. My steel horse waits in the driveway, a reliable mount of Germanic origin.



When does the fun begin?

Having negotiated a rough trail known as the M1, I arrive in a tavern to meet an acquaintance.

The stout yeoman of the bar serves me a pint of foaming ale, a weak brew known as Foster's Washing Lager.

UNDER PRESSURE

The following day we have a clan of six, and a taxi arrives to take us to Ye Olde Edgbaston cricket ground in Birmingham. "Tonys Taxis. Business travel. No apostrophe required."

For our executive entertainment, Tony plays a DVD of Queen's Live Aid performance. However, Mercury's majesty is intermittently interrupted by people ringing up for a cab, which Tony then bats on to one of his minions.

"Can I have a cab from Braunston post office?" inquires a caller.

"Where you going?" barks Tony.

"Rugby station."

"What's your name?"

"Blackburn."

"It'll be a woman driver."

Having arranged the fare, he launches into some provincial racism, the suggestion being that the cab-driving British Asian community are honing in on Braunston post office to steal his business. The irony that we are on our way to watch England vs Pakistan is seemingly lost on Tony.



Much more thrilling than virtual elf orgies.

The next call is a brief affair.

"Where are you?"

"MacDonald's."

"Where you going?"

"Home."

IT'S A KIND OF MAGIC

The cricket is a washout, albeit made more entertaining thanks to a magical powder crafted from mushrooms.

During the final hours of moribund play, the crowd is deliriously drunk, and an international sporting event is largely overshadowed by a man dressed as Orville the Duck.



Do you think they're procedurally generated?

Further entertainment ensues in the form of the cup-snake game, whereby a hapless berk constructs a tower of plastic pint pots and attempts to evade the stewards. It's essentially live Pac-Man, as our man gobbles up the beakers while the orange-clad ghosts close in on him. Without their fascistic intervention, it's merely somebody volunteering to tidy up, something that they eventually realize.

Outside the ground, Brummie strippers give out flyers for the local grot shops in a cynical but effective piece of guerrilla marketing.

"Where's Aroura?" bellows one from the nearby chippie. "I've got her a pie."

Back in Tonys (sic) Taxi, his mood appears to have darkened, and he makes sure that everybody is wearing a seat belt. He begrudgingly lets us drink, with the threat of a fine should we spill any on his leather seats.

Slewing across three lanes of traffic at 100mph, we have to forcibly request that he drives properly. He apologizes repeatedly. We watch Michael Jackson's *This Is It* in cowed silence. By way of a peace offering, Tony hands me a Disney DVD. Opening the case, there's a hand-written disc: "*Sex Machines 12*".

Lovely stuff. PCZ

PCZONE

Future Publishing Ltd
2 Balcombe Street, London, NW1 6NW
Tel 020 7042 4720 **Fax** 020 7042 4729
Email letters@pczone.co.uk
Website pczone.co.uk

THE WILD BUNCH
Acting Editor Jon Hicks
Acting Associate Editor Tamsin Oxford
Hardware Editor Phil Wand
Staff Writer David Brown
Production Editor Richard Cogrove
Art Editor Matt Kendall
Deputy Art Editor James Roff
Contributors Nick Brakespeare, Mike Channell, Adam Glick, Dan Griliopoulos, Steve Hill, Steve Hogarty, Will Porter, Paul Presley, Keith Pullin, Richie Shoemaker and Phil Wand.

With thanks to... Tamsin and Jon for seeing us off, and you – our loyal readers.

Group Art Director Ian Miller
Creative Director Bob Abbott
Editorial Director Jim Douglas

ADVERTISING
Ad Planning Director Steve Payne
London Sales Director Malcolm Stoodley 0207 042 4156
Advertisement Director Sean Igoe 0207 042 4150
Advertisement Manager Emma Cull 0207 042 4233
Online Advertising Sales Manager Andrew Church 0207 042 4237
Sales Account Manager Alistair Williams 0207 042 4238
Sales Account Manager Rachel Sinclair 0207 042 4235
Sales Account Manager Mark Wooldridge 0207 042 4231
Sales Account Manager Oliver Chislett 0207 042 4240

MARKETING
Brand Marketing Manager James Kick
Campaign Manager Tom Acton
Subscriptions Product Manager Iain Russell

CIRCULATION
Trade Marketing Manager Stuart Agnew
Trade Marketing Executive Matt Cooper
Trade Marketing Director Rachael Cock

PRINT & PRODUCTION
Production Co-ordinator Marie Quilter
Production Manager Ralph Stringer
Head of Production Richard Mason

LICENSING
International Licensing Director Tim Hudson

THE ONES WHO MADE THE DECISION
Head of Edge International and PC Gaming James Binns
Chief Operating Officer Simon Wear
Chief Executive Officer Stevie Spring

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE... HAH! YEAH RIGHT

Printed in the UK by William Gibbons Ltd on behalf of Future.
Cover printed in the UK by Grange.
Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd,
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT.
Tel: 0207 429 4000

SUBSCRIPTIONS
UK hotline 0844 848 2852
International hotline +44 (0) 1604 251045
Email contact@myfavouritemagazines.co.uk
Website myfavouritemagazines.co.uk
To view your account details go to myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/youraccount

Want to work for Future?
Visit www.futurenet.com/jobs

ABC
A member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations
11,357
Jan-Dec 2009

Future
MEDIA WITH PASSION

Future produces carefully targeted magazines, websites and events for people with a passion. We publish more than 180 magazines, websites and events and we export or license our publications to 90 countries across the world.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR).

www.futureplc.com

Chief Executive Stevie Spring
Non-executive Chairman Roger Parry
Group Finance Director John Bowman
Tel +44 (0)20 7042 4000 (London)
Tel +44 (0)1225 442244 (Bath)

PCZONE is the registered trademark of Future Publishing Limited. All rights reserved.
© Future Publishing Limited 2010. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used or reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. The registered office of Future Publishing Limited is at Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. All information contained in this magazine is for informational purposes only and is, to the best of our knowledge, correct at the time of going to press. Future Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies that occur. Readers are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers direct with regard to pricing. All submissions to PC ZONE magazine are made on the basis of a licence to publish the submission in PC ZONE magazine, its associated websites and all world-wide licensed editions of the same. Any material submitted is sent at the owner's risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future Publishing Limited nor its agents shall be liable for loss or damage. We encourage you to recycle this magazine, either through your usual household recyclable waste collection service or at a recycling site.

FSC Mixed Sources
Product group from well-managed forests and other controlled sources
Cert no. TT-COC-1815
www.fsc.org
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from well managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. Future Publishing and its paper suppliers have been independently certified in accordance with the rules of the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council).

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

Contributors

PC ZONE's staff through the ages: each one a great name, none small

1993-2000

Amaya Lopez, Andrew Wright, Andy Butcher, Andy Clerkson, Anthony Soares, Barbara Smith, Caroline Westbrooke, Charlie Brooker, Chris Anderson, Colin 'Culky' Culk, Dan Emery, Daniel Pemberton, Dave Woods, David Mathieson, David McCandless, Duncan MacDonald, Duncan Swain, Gareth Ramsey, Huw Collingbourne, Ian Jackson, James Woods, Jeremy Wells, John Davison, John Ewing, John Houlihan, Kirsty Fortune, Laurence Scotford, Marcus Bullen, Mark Burgess, Mike Gerrard, Patrick McCarthy, Paul Ditta, Paul Hales, Paul Lakin, Paul Presley, Paul Rigby, Paul Rose, Phil South, Richard Cleves, Rob Tribe, Sheldon May, Simon Bradley, Steve Pritchard, Toby Finlay, Tom Finlay, Tony Dennis, Warren Chrismas, and so many more...

2000-2010

Adam Glick, Adam Phillips, Alec Meer, Alex Dale, Alex Hutchinson, Ali Wood, Ali Parr, Anthony Holden, Caramel Quin, Chloe Marx, Chris Capel, Clare Lydon, Dan Goldberg, Dan Griliopoulos, Dan Marshall, Daniel Emery, Daniel Robson, David Brown, Dominik Diamond, Duncan MacDonald, Ed Zitron, Gareth Lowndes, Henry Obasi, James Lyon, Jamie Sefton, Joe Roberts, John Woolford, Jon 'Log' Blyth, Journobot, Julie Bennett, Kosta Krauth, Les Ellis, Marc Walker, Mark Eveleigh, Mark Hill, Martin Korda, Matt Chesire, Max Donnely, Michael Filby, Michael Wass, Mike Channell, Nick Brakespear, Nick Funnell, Oli Welsh, Paul Presley, Pavel Barter, Phil 'Wandy' Wand, Rhianna Prachett, Richie Shoemaker, Rob Taylor, Rob Todd, Rob Woodcock, Rosanne Negrotti, Russ Fischer, Ryan Garside, Sam Kieldsen, Scott Steinberg, Seth Kelly, Shelby Evans, Simon Munk, Stacey C Rivera, Steve Hill, Steve O'Hagan, Steve Randall, Stuart Campbell, Suzy Wallace, Tamsin Oxford, Tim Ponting, Todd Peterson, Tony Lamb, Will Porter, Will Sargent and countless others...

COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS: 1. Only completed entries received before the date stated in the competition page will be entered. 2. Winners will be notified by post. 3. No cash alternative. 4. Prizes not necessarily as shown. 5. No correspondence will be entered into. 6. The editor's decision is final. 7. Responsibility can't be accepted for lost or undelivered entries. 8. Competitions are not open to readers outside the UK, employees of Future or its affiliates, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the competition. 9. Entrants must be 18 years or over. Full conditions are available at snipurl.com/futuretcs.

TEXT INSTRUCTIONS: 87474 putting PCZTXT at the beginning of the message, then leave a space and text to your heart's content (no more than 160 characters). TEXT TERMS & CONDITIONS: By texting PC ZONE you're agreeing to receive details of more offers from Future Publishing Limited and related third parties. If you don't want to receive any info on offers and promotions, please text the word NO INFO at the end of your text message. Texts will be charged at 25p plus your standard network tariff rate.

In loving memory of

PC ZONE

1993 - 2010



Entry Music

Day Trip To Bangor by Fiddler's Dram

Introduction

By a reader who used to buy it every month, but stopped when he got a broadband connection. Although he did pick up an issue a couple of years ago, but it wasn't the same and felt thinner.

Reading

Stop All The Cocks by W.H. Ardon
A plea for maturity in map-making features.

Five Minutes Of Plaintive Muted Tromboning.

Poem

A collection of limericks from demented forum stalker Mad Al, featuring a cast hailing from UK regions as obscure and diverse as Diss, Crook, and Hainult.

The Lord's Prayer

We will be singing the version that begins
'Our Father, who aren't in Heaven, hello! What's your name?'

During the Lord's Prayer, decorative peacocks will be dropped into the room from the rafters. Please do not augment their physical and mental distress by trying to climb onto them.

Ten Minutes Of Bewildered Howling

followed by a single party popper being fired into a bucket of milk.

Choir

Please be upstanding for the entrance of a thunderous hundred-strong gospel choir, who will sing Rocks by Primal Scream six times before losing focus and wandering off.

Fight

As the bar tab runs out.

Finale

Wherein a man dressed as the first Issue of PC ZONE walks in, behaves in a knowledgeable yet irreverent fashion, and is shown a montage of the wonders that await him over the next seventeen years, after which he will slump into an irretrievable and motionless despair, from which no amount of physical or financial abuse will rouse him.

THE UK'S FIRST GAMES ONLY PC MAGAZINE

FIRST ISSUE

PC ZONE

100% GAMES

OVER 60 PAGES OF GAMES REVIEWS AND PREVIEWS

EXCLUSIVE

X-Wing

LucasArts Xplode Into Space

COMPLETE GUIDE TO EVERY AVAILABLE GAME INSIDE

8 PAGES OF TACTICS INCLUDING STAR CONTROL 2 & ALONE IN THE DARK COMPLETE SOLUTIONS

PLUS *Ultima Underworld 2*
Starfighter Ace – 3D Action
Tornado • Stunt Island
Dune 2 • Lemmings 2

WIN A MULTIMEDIA SYSTEM WORTH OVER £1200!

April 1993
Issue 1
£3.95



THE END IS THE BEGINNING IS THE END
PC ZONE 1993 – 2010


"WAR ISN'T ABOUT WHO'S RIGHT IT'S ABOUT WHO'S LEFT"
Farewell to PC ZONE,
from everyone in New Vegas!